DÆDALUS

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Hypocrisy, Illusion, and Evasion

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Hypocrisy, Illusion, and Evasion

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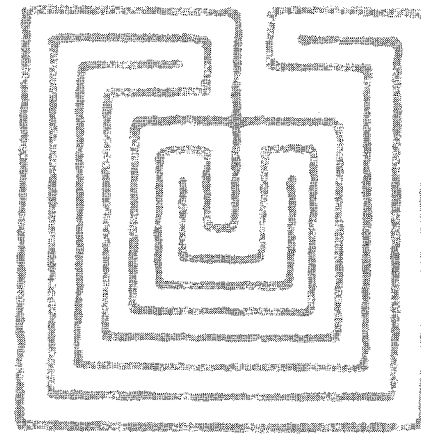

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Preface to the Issue "Hypocrisy, Illusion, and Evasion"

MOST ISSUES OF *DAEDALUS* grow out of a relatively long planning process in which the Editors, collaborating with a group of advisers, deliberate on whether a specific subject ought to be treated, who might be invited to contribute to such a study, and why certain themes are to be preferred over others. This present issue, however, developed quite differently, by a procedure followed only once before in our more than twenty years of publication. The Editor, learning almost by accident of the existence of a manuscript he believed might interest the readers of this Journal, read the manuscript, and at once knew that he wanted to publish it in *Daedalus;* he also knew he wanted others to read it so that they might be encouraged to write on related themes. An issue formed itself almost inadvertently; yet, in some sense, the volume is a deliberately planned intellectual exercise. For, had Judith Shklar's "Let Us Not Be Hypocritical" failed to engage the interest of those who read the essay in its original draft form, or had they shown any reluctance to write, there would never have been an issue. How, then, is one to explain the positive response?

That the subject evokes universal and timeless questions may seem reason enough for the quick show of concern. Still, something more is certainly involved. For a generation habituated to hearing constantly about lying, dissimulation, deceit, and insincerity, hypocrisy will seem almost a code word, relevant to a host of contemporary attitudes and policies that cry out for condemnation. Our study, however, is not principally concerned with hypocrisy in its contemporary guises. Indeed, as the reader will quickly note, it deals as much with figures of the late Renaissance and with life and institutions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as with anything that touches Europe, America, or Asia today. Yet, even those essays that are principally literary and historical seem to speak to modern concerns. They lead us to reflect again on why certain ages have been so obsessed with hypocrisy, and why the urge to "unmask," to rip away the veil of illusion and evasion, has seemed so powerful at certain times in history. More than that, they suggest why the hypocrite takes over center stage at certain junctures, and why the phenomenon of hypocrisy—its virtual institutionalization—commands such attention.

These essays compel us to look again at the character of the hypocrite, to inquire into how he is shaped and what hopes and fears motivate him. We are led, however, also to a less common inquiry—one that some may find embarrassing—to ask what the antihypocrite is like and why he assumes such importance at certain moments. This is certainly an unconventional theme; the idea that there may be compelling reasons for looking also at the passionate foe of hypocrisy is rarely admitted. Yet, we need to know why dissimulation, once thought to be so offensive in its religious manifestations, has become, if pos-

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sible, an even more heinous offense in contemporary politics. Unnamed and unspoken ideological preferences seem to lurk behind this constant fear of being taken in. What makes one society so much more preoccupied with detecting and exposing hypocrisy than another? Is it simply that one is more exposed to the hazard than another? Or, are the differences in susceptibility linked to different moral and ethical systems? Why, for example, is sincerity in the modern world thought to be such a virtue? Has it always been thought that? Is it so considered everywhere? Are there certain generational differences in respect to such matters? What do they reflect? When so few of the traditional vices are thought important, and when they are so casually dismissed by those who pride themselves on being liberated, what is one to make of the seemingly perpetual concern in certain quarters to demonstrate and prove candor? Are such men and women simply fortunate, able to enjoy a measure of moral security at a time when so many others are wracked by doubt and confusion? Or, is there a certain amount of posturing in all this, with no little self-deception, where aggressions and uncertainties are artfully concealed in a demand for total truth?

Questions of this sort are not frequently asked; yet, they leap out in the very first articles in this volume and take on wholly new dimensions in discussions of the meaning of innocence, guilt, and moral obligation. Is there any reason to accept the world as it is? When is it prudent to be silent? When is it morally imperative to speak out? Why did hypocrisy appear to be so overwhelmingly important in early modern Europe when Shakespeare and Montaigne wrote? Their representations of the hazards of hypocrisy depend largely on classical texts, but each appears to have gone beyond these to explore also the problems of modern life, with its peculiar and insatiable strivings. Is their preoccupation with masking and unmasking—with the world as theater—a novel device for revealing the corrupting effects of dissimulation? Or, ought Shakespeare to be seen as simply perpetuating a traditional concern with what follows from a breakdown of trust and the triumph of fraud? If Romanticism and liberalism are credited with having helped create a good deal of the modern sensibility to hypocrisy, the origins of that sensibility are to be found earlier, in the breakdown of a sense of service, with its emphasis on dedication and loyalty, and its replacement with self, self-interest, and self-advancement.

Is a concern with self not one of Montaigne's principal teachings? In urging the individual to be less concerned with what others think, to find a retreat in himself, "to be one's self and belong only to one's self," Montaigne gives early expression to an individualism that gains increasing favor with the passage of time. Yet, we are reminded that Montaigne understood the illusory character of all efforts to avoid the world of appearances, to shun the world of imposture. Ought he not to be reckoned among the first who recognized that the supreme illusion was to believe in the possibility of escaping illusion?

Montaigne had no wish to elect for himself the role of "disillusioned elder," content to reveal and denounce the vices of his time. Yet, such denunciations are all too common in our day. Journalism seems to thrive on it; politics seems to require it. The search for contradictions—between a world of appearances and the world of reality—seems never-ending. Yet, as any close study of a particular society will reveal, whether of seventeenth century Holland or contemporary Iran, experience is not easily compartmentalized. Societies do not show simple

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patterns; their contradictions are more pregnant with meaning than is sometimes acknowledged. Calvinist Holland was not simply a society of virtuous men and women, all thrifty, tidy, and industrious; nor does it help very much to say that it tolerated vice as an escape valve, accommodating those who could not otherwise live by strict Puritan standards. The coexistence of virtue and vice—never wholly separated but never visibly at ease with each other—cannot be seen simply as an expression of moral disingenuousness, let alone hypocrisy. Dutch experience is an archetypal example of the capacity of men to operate simultaneously and in seeming sincerity with two divergent value systems: "The one embraced money; power; authority; the gratification of appetite; the indulgence of domestic epicureanism in food, drink, costume, and furnishing; the collective celebration of community in ritual feasts and banquets; the innocence of fairs and pastimes; and the nobility of arts and sciences. The other invoked austerity; piety; frugality; parsimony; sobriety; the vanity of worldly success; the exclusive community of sacred congregation; the abhorrent frivolousness of art, and the impertinent blasphemies of science."

A comparable confusion of standards may be looked for in contemporary Iran. While it would be easy to misconstrue the Iranian appetite for concealment, and to make too much of what seems to be the almost constant habit of dissimulation, the meaning of both needs to be reflected on. If contemporary Western values, with their characteristically heavy emphasis on frankness and honesty, are set aside; and if an attempt is made to understand the Iranian definition of integrity, with its very specific preference for the inner over the outer, for that which is concealed over that which is shown, certain of the more obscure qualities of Iranian public and private life begin to make sense. Again, a simple or conventional representation of virtue and vice will help not at all in defining the tensions common to such a society.

Nor will it help to explain why there is so much interest today in institutional hypocrisy. If universities, armies, large corporations, and governments are indeed the "natural habitat" of hypocrisy, as is suggested in this volume, why should this be so? Even more, why should the account of a sixteenth century trial conducted by the Spanish Inquisition be thought relevant to our own situation today? Clearly, because the trial suggests how repression is organized, how much it depends on public acquiescence and consent, and how its defeat is finally engineered. A historical vignette—superficially irrelevant to our more rational modern ways—is suddenly seen to illuminate a universal condition.

Such concerns, on the surface, must appear very remote from a consideration of John Dewey and his democratic ideology. But in Dewey's creation of what is recognized to be a "fantasy world," ostensibly impersonal, scientific, and sufficient, there was substantial intolerance for values other generations had thought consequential. Dewey believed democracy involved nothing more than "the ordering of life in response to the needs of the moment, in accordance with the ascertained truth of the moment." Never doubting such truth could be discovered, Dewey, who had thought of starting a newspaper to disseminate that truth, launched a school to perpetuate it. He never once entertained the possibility that it was all an illusion.

This issue of *Daedalus* owes a great deal to the Ford Foundation. Its grant for interdisciplinary research made this bold venture possible. That literature, phi-

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losophy, fine arts, and history are not discrete intellectual categories, to be separated from something called contemporary politics, and that the events of the twentieth century take on a wholly new dimension when seen in the perspective of the thought and experience of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, will be obvious to many. The spirit of this collection of essays, like much of its subject matter, is in a classical tradition. Seized of a universal and timeless problem, these studies seek to hold up a mirror for man, to invite him to a certain introspection about the human comedy. On a more practical level, they suggest how extensive are the possibilities for humanistic and social research of a kind not now commonly pursued.

S.R.G.

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JUDITH SHKLAR

Let Us Not Be Hypocritical

> *Becket*. The world is certainly tending toward butchery, Baron. The lesson of this battle, which cost us far too much, is that we will have to form platoons of cutthroats, that is all.
>
> *Baron*. And a soldier's honor, my Lord Chancellor, what of that?
>
> *Becket*. A soldier's honor, Baron, is to win victories. Let us not be hypocritical . . .
>
> *Baron*. What a mentality!
>
> Jean Anouilh, *Becket*

WHAT *IS* THE MENTALITY of those who cannot bear hypocrisy? The question is not trivial. Hypocrisy remains the only unforgivable sin even, perhaps especially, among those who can overlook and explain away almost every other vice. However much suffering it may cause, and however many social and religious rules it may violate, evil is to be understood after due analysis. But not hypocrisy, which alone is now inexcusable. Not that the hypocrite was ever popular. Every age, every form of literature, and every public stage has held him up for contempt and ridicule. Even if in the past the hypocrite was joined by a far greater number of other kinds of wicked people in the rogues' gallery, he was never anything less than utterly despised. We therefore know a great deal about various types of hypocrites. Our literature is infinitely rich in portraits of them. Playwrights have always found them irresistible. The double pretense of the actor playing the part of a man who is playing a part allows for all kinds of sly mockery of everything on the stage and in the audience. There is all the ambiguity of the play within a play here, but with more possibilities for invention.

But what of those who cannot abide hypocrisy, and who see it everywhere? What is the professional antihypocrite like? Can he escape the web of pretense he sees all around him? Or are he and his adversaries locked into a mutually enhancing, rather than destructive, conflict? In short, what sort of figure is he? We have fewer antihypocritical roles to entertain us. Becket is certainly a fine example of the species, an intellectual unable to endure the charades played by more conventional people. He is, however, not a pure specimen. For that we must look to Molière's *Misanthrope*. Alceste hates the thing itself, not just this or that particular manifestation of it.

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> By God, I say it's base and scandalous,
> To falsify the heart's affections thus.[1]

Not for him "those soft speeches and that sugary grin," and no decorum or politeness either:

> We should condemn with all our force
> Such false and artificial intercourse.

There is also no tolerance or kindness in Alceste, which is why Molière called him a hater of mankind.

Why is Alceste so single-minded in his contempt? He not only hurts the feelings of an untalented poet, but also quarrels with his friend, and finally loses the woman he loves, all because of his antihypocritical stance. Alceste is afraid of being fooled. His terror of being deceived is such that it makes him a bully and, in the end, the dupe of his own suspicions. The reason for his mortal fear of being taken in by pretense is that it might threaten his domination over those around him. That is why he is so susceptible to the schemes of the spiteful spinster, Arsinoé, who is an exaggerated version of himself. She uses the cant of perfect frankness to make innocent behavior seem guilty. She brings out the hypocrisy implicit in Alceste's harsh candor, which we merely suspect in him, especially in his refusal to be anything but "himself" on all occasions. That is his mark of honesty. But Célimène does not agree: she can see quite clearly that such conduct is merely domineering, and she mocks his love, which

> Would find its perfect consummation
> In ecstacies of rage and reprobation.

Since he cannot force her to renounce the company of all other people for his sake, he gives her up and decides upon a solitary existence in which he will not find any obstacles to his self-righteous anger. The audience is not inclined to pity him as his friends do, because to us he is the archetype of the moral oppressor.

In this respect Becket resembles him, for he also means to govern the barons. He despises not only their military rhetoric, but their boorish stupidity in general. They are the very models of ruling-class incompetence in his eyes. His sardonic frankness is both contemptuous and assertive. Like Alceste, Becket quite rightly sees that there is a power play at work in the hypocrisy of those around him, but he can recognize it only in conventional soldiers and rulers. In the end, Henry II can accuse him of hypocrisy as well, for he uses the honor of the Church merely as an excuse for avenging his own. That happens only after Becket is transformed into an archbishop, but it was always latent in his character.

Only Alceste, the misanthrope, is a pure, undifferentiating, unqualified hater of hypocrisy. And it is he who can barely hide the aggression and self-infatuation that bulge under his cloak of candor. Perhaps we never meet types as pure as Alceste in actuality. But without seeing them in such perfect and complete characters on the stage we would not be able to identify obscure bundles of qualities as coherent characters in our social world. How could we recognize

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and represent the hypocrite and his relentless pursuer without Tartuffe, Uriah Heep, Becket, and Alceste? Moral and political arguments need not rely on abstractions, but experience only hints at and worries us about what we are looking for and at. Only literature and history sketch the picture of a character or a group for us. Then we can return to consider the present social scene and make it more orderly, distinct, and intelligible with the aid of these images. To recognize hypocrites and antihypocrites, one may simply move back and forth from the world of art to that of public experience and political theory. That is why we continue to argue about "imaginary" people like Alceste and his behavior, for not everyone accepts Molière's uncharitable view of his hero's uncompromising endeavors. Rousseau thought him a much maligned man, too sincere to endure the corruptions of an artificial society. It is not just a matter of Alceste's particular reactions to hypocrisy that concerns us, but of the character and value of the accusations made against hypocritical behavior in general.

Why is hypocrisy so odious? Why does everyone carry on just like Alceste, at least occasionally? Indeed, just what is hypocrisy? The *Oxford English Dictionary* is always helpful. Originally hypocrisy meant acting a part on the stage. For practical purposes the definition that counts is: "assuming a false appearance of virtue or goodness, with dissimulation of real character or inclination, especially in respect of religious life or belief." Especially in respect of religion! The art of unmasking one's opponents has always been the favorite weapon in religious warfare. All sects accuse each other of hypocrisy, and the anticlerical can never see anything but hypocrisy in a preacher. They see not merely a personal weakness or an inclination to profess beliefs one does not hold, but an entire character, a whole personality. As an Elizabethan book of characters put it, he is "the worst kind of player, by so much as he acts the better part, which hath also two faces, ofttimes two hearts . . . . [He] is the stranger's saint, the neighbor's disease, the blot of goodness, a rotten stick in a dark night, a poppy in a corn field, an ill-tempered candle with a great snuff that in going out smells ill, an angel abroad, a devil at home, and worse when an angel than a devil." The writer of this unmincing passage was evidently a devout Christian expressing the most traditional sentiments. The *O.E.D.*, in fact, refers us to two very revealing passages in the New Testament which show how troubling hypocrisy was even in the earliest days of Christianity. Sham faith is a haunting shadow for the genuinely religious mind. The striving for religious perfection is interminable, and the demand for greater fidelity is ever more exigent. The stricter these requirements of faith are, however, the more likely real or imputable pretense becomes. But the only weapon against it is to insist on even greater efforts, which in turn encourages the very vice that is to be extirpated. Exigency creates hypocrisy as one of its inevitable side products, and puritanism is invariably accompanied by hypocrisy, and duly ridiculed for it. Here also there is a great deal of mutual spiritual aggression. The devout, on principle self-critical, are not likely to spare the errant neighbor. That is why in Matthew, chapters 6 and 7, we read of Jesus excoriating not only the hypocrisy of the ostentatious almsgiver, but those people who dwell on the minor faults of others while remaining oblivious to their own enormities. It is almost as if he recognized the tension in his own message. A secret, genuine charity and a constant and severe self-scrutiny are psychologically unthinkable without the moral pride that is all but

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inseparable from spiritual energy. That is what was to anger Paul so intensely, because he also perceived the will to lord it over others in every show of excessive zeal (I Timothy, chapters 4-6). It is hypocritical to "command" people to abstain from meat, because food is one of God's many natural gifts to mankind. The hypocrisy here is in pretending to a piety that is greater than God requires, and therefore, in fact, a covert form of pride, of which fake humility is indeed the most common expression. The difficulty for Paul is that in calling for even greater, more genuine humility, he is probably stimulating the pretense. There is here a very clear recognition of just what is wrong with hypocrisy per se: it is a form of coercion. As Pascal was to say, it is the sheer unfairness of being forced to esteem someone more highly than he deserves that is so infuriating. Nevertheless, for all their insight, neither the Apostles nor others who have sought seriously to raise the standards of moral purity, can escape the spiraling escalation of hypocrisy, unwittingly set in motion by antihypocrisy. That is especially so when charity and humility, which are matters of motive and of inner disposition, are at stake. That is how puritanism came to acquire its awful reputation. As an old English couplet puts it,

> Pure in show, an upright holy man
> Corruption within—and called a Puritan.

Puritans are inherently prone to hypocrisy and to antihypocrisy because they are exigent and fearful. They suffer from an inner tug of war as intense as the perpetual accusations they thrust at others, because they are terrified of their own weaknesses and suspicious of their neighbors' lapses. Fear of the real self is added to fear of God. This is the kind of religiosity Hazlitt had in mind when he spoke of a "man afraid of looking into the state of his soul, lest at the same time he should reveal it to Heaven; and [who] tries to persuade himself that by shutting his eyes to his true character and feelings, they will remain a profound secret, both here and hereafter. This is a strong engine and irresistible inducement to self-deception." Such a man is not merely suspected of hypocrisy, he suspects himself and especially others of fraudulent piety. Fear of failure, of being crushed by an overpowering God, induces anxiety about one's own faith and doubts about that of others. An inability to face himself only encourages censoriousness, as a form of self-protection and self-reassurance. If, by raising the standards of piety, he adds to his fears for his own soul, he also finds comfort in the righteousness of his public zeal. The upshot is a whole culture of fear in which hypocrisy in all its manifestations flourishes, as does antihypocrisy.

Tartuffe is the unmatched black comedy of the puritan culture of fear and of the opportunities it offers hypocrisy. Tartuffe could never have succeeded without Oronte. The latter is predisposed to the inquisitorial and tyrannical behavior that Tartuffe urges on him. The puritanical hyper-moralism of the *dévots* and Jansenists had already aroused the irritability and credulity of this aging enthusiast. Tartuffe is able to part him from his family and his property because he is ripe for it. This virtuoso of hypocrisy is, unlike his victim, not undone by self-delusion. He is in it strictly for profit, and we learn at the end that he is an experienced crook with a long criminal record. Oronte was not the first to be

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fingered by this versatile con man, but he provided Tartuffe with splendid opportunities. He offered an ideal environment for fraud. Molière, moreover, knew perfectly well that there is a political aspect to this moral climate. An oppressive regime is very likely to have many uses for a man like Tartuffe, who professes as deep a devotion to his king as to God. In fact, he thinks that he is doing quite well as an informer. So does the audience until the last moment, when Tartuffe is confronted by a wise and just monarch (Molière's patron) who sends him back to jail and returns Oronte's property. We are, however, given an anxious moment to remember that Tartuffe's scheme to entrap Oronte might well have succeeded under a more persecutive or less intelligent government. And we are made to remember that the moral atmosphere and the character of government may have more to do with the incidence of hypocrisy than all the aggressive outrage of the Alcestes of this world.

Tartuffe is political in an even more profound way. Oronte's family lives in the kind of fear that tyranny always spreads. His children and servants suffer, and so does the insecure tyrant. His fear is more consuming than theirs is, because it has no focus. Above all else, Oronte fears reality. He cannot bear evidence that would shake his trust in the con man or in his own righteous fury. Tyrants are the personification of all the illusions that accompany domination.[2] Even less cruel and oppressive people are like that. All of us wrap ourselves in unreality to protect ourselves against people whom we are certainly not crushing, but whom we do not choose to see or to help. No one, in fact, can bear all the facts all the time. Nevertheless, there are cultures that seem particularly prone to the "Podsnappery" that Dickens saw everywhere in Victorian England. Theirs "was not a very large world, morally," and when they were faced with "disagreeables," they said, "I don't want to know about it; I don't choose to discuss it, I don't admit it!" Podsnap turned his eyes away from destitution, from social cruelty, and above all, from sex. "The question about everything was, would it bring a blush to the cheek of [a] young person." Dickens's portraits of all these hypocrisies do not, however, neglect the obvious. Repression was not so great that criticism, laughter, and wit were impossible. He had far less to fear than Molière.

Dickens was not alone. He was joined by Carlyle, Mill, Huxley, Clough, and many others, in a chorus of biblical thunder against hypocrisy. Some feared that science would be stifled by the conventions of an ostentatious religiosity. Others saw the death of individuality in an enervating timidity that seemed incapable of sustaining any sort of positive character. And not a few simply felt an enormous nausea at such a mass of insincerity, dishonesty, sentimentality, and willful self-deception.

Since these challengers won the day, one now asks what the fuss was all about. Certainly the Victorian middle classes were self-protective, and their critics frightened them into an even deeper defensiveness. Insecure in their lately acquired position, and in the midst of a religious revival, they were not expansive morally. Were they, however, hypocritical? Did they not wish to be what they proclaimed everyone ought to be? To fail in one's own aspirations is not hypocrisy. In fact, they really believed in chastity, monogamy, thrift, and work. If many did not achieve these, many others did, at a considerable psychic cost. Repression is not hypocrisy. Only their refusal to admit that *Mayhew's*

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London even existed, that is, their complacency, was hypocritical. The hypocrite is hiding something evil because it is in his interest to do so. Sexual repression and emotional silence are self-inflicted wounds, not social crimes. They were part of the self-imposed discipline of a massively self-distrusting, newly arrived, religiously unsettled middle class, which could feel the contempt from above and the rage from below, while it had to endure the torments of ideological, scientific, and literary upheavals. Theirs was the self-hatred that marks all puritanism. Self-scrutiny and fear of illusion are, however, also essential parts of the puritan mind, and its defensive system, whether personal or cultural, is brittle. There was a bias against hypocrisy there also. Podsnap read Dickens week after week and, in time, it wore him down.[3] The shrill antihypocritical chatter of Bloomsbury was, in any case, only a belated revolt against a quasi-Spartan silence that had lost its socially unifying purpose for many people. The real transformation was not a revolt against hypocrisy, but against the misery and injustice it had ceased to veil.

Dickens, for one, could see even within the culture of hypocrisy the difference between extortion or theft and mere hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is made very profitable in such a society, but it did not blind him to the moral distance between crime and pretense. There is a stunning scene in *David Copperfield* in which Dickens's immortal hypocrite, Uriah Heep, explains why his always being "umble" is profitable. David may not care for professions of humility or any other exhibitions of that sort, but he does, in spite of his general obtuseness, begin to see that Uriah was brought up to be a hypocrite. Uriah was, as his parents before him had been, one of the deserving poor.

> "There now," said Uriah, looking flabby and lead-coloured in the moonlight. "Didn't I know it! But how little you think of the rightful umbleness of a person in my station, Master Copperfield! Father and me was both brought up at a foundation school for boys, and Mother, she was likewise brought up at a public, sort of charitable, establishment. They taught us all a deal of umbleness—not much else that I know of, from morning to night. We was to be umble to this person, and umble to that, and to pull off our caps here, and to make bows there, and always to know our place, and abase ourselves before our betters. And we had such a lot of betters! Father got the monitor-medal by being umble. So did I. Father got made a sexton by being umble. He had the character, among the gentlefolks, of being such a well-behaved man, that they were determined to bring him in. 'Be umble, Uriah,' says Father to me, and you'll get on. It was what was always being dinned into you and me at school: it's what goes down best. Be umble, says Father and you'll do! And really it ain't done bad! . . . When I was quite a young boy," said Uriah, "I got to know what umbleness did, and I took to it. I ate umble pie with an appetite. I stopped at the umble point of my learning, and says I, 'Hold hard!' When you offered to teach me Latin, I knew better. 'People like to be above you,' says Father, 'keep yourself down.' I am very umble to the present moment, Master Copperfield, but I've got a little power!"

Dickens did not excuse Uriah's numerous villainies. Indeed, he made him both morally and sexually as unattractive as possible. Uriah is also a con man, and deserves to land in jail, as he eventually does. It is not his crimes, but only one of his hypocrisies, his all-purpose, serviceable humility, that Dickens wants us to understand. For hypocrisy, whatever its specific function, is socially learned behavior, and Dickens reminds us of it. In the absence of friendship and

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spontaneous generosity, we must have charity as an office and as a public obligation organized by church or state. In either case its beneficiaries, the poor, must prove themselves worthy. That means showing that they have reached a psychological bottom of utter humility that will also guarantee gratitude for whatever they may receive. Otherwise, there would be no rewards for the distributors of alms, and they would have no sense of their own worth.

In spite of all that is said in Matthew, philanthropic politicians tend to speak loudly of their compassion. In return, one may expect a sullen abjectness among its recipients. Few have the resources to become self-aware, scheming, accomplished hypocrites like Uriah Heep. Perhaps this is the best we can do, and one ought not to scoff at an inadequate charity that cannot accomplish what neither justice nor expediency can achieve. Dickens merely noticed its costs. Without a drop of pity for the clammy-handed Uriah and his crimes, Dickens makes us see at least that an early exposure to public benevolence had helped him to become so ostentatiously "umble." His misdeeds are not to be pitied away, but we do see Uriah Heep in his social setting, and we recognize that hypocrisy was not the worst of his faults.

Dickens was a great connoisseur of hypocrisy, yet he was not obsessive about it. He could see the playacting of all his characters, even the most agreeable ones, who are as outspoken as David's wonderful Aunt Betsey. He hated the humbug that sugarcoats meanness just as he loved the eccentric gruffness of real generosity, but he never forgot the difference between wickedness and mere pretension. Why has his sense of humanity been so rare? Why are people so overwhelmed by loathing for hypocrisy? Hegel thought that there had been a change in the quality of hypocrisy that made it peculiarly repulsive. In this he may have been mistaken, but he did uncover aspects of the psychology of conscience that render the perpetual wrangling between all kinds of hypocrites and antihypocrites comprehensible in his age as well as in our own.

The new conscience Hegel contemplated with a baleful eye was, in his words, "lacking in objective content . . . but the infinite certainty of itself." What happens to a conscience that is uninformed by God and social mores? What does the inner self do when it is left unwatched and bereft of those commonsense rules of natural and divinely sanctioned conduct? Paul relied on them, and a conscience tutored in public and revealed knowledge was for a long time after considered the best protection against all temptations, including hypocrisy. Nevertheless, the hyperactive conscience has always been treacherous. If even the trained conscience can be a false guide, what of one abandoned to its own devices? Can such a conscience cope with the hypocrisy and reactive antihypocrisy to which it is always liable? To Hegel it seemed clear that it could not, and that the new subjectivity had given rise to a hideous reign of hypocrisy of a peculiarly assertive kind, quite unlike the old "naïve" sort. The "naïve" hypocrite hides acts and beliefs that he knows to be wrong. His conscience may even trouble him. That is why he resorts to subterfuge. The new hypocrite simply adjusts his conscience by ascribing noble, disinterested, and altruistic intentions to all his behavior. He is the sole instructor of his own conscience. If everyone were to accept these self-evaluations there would be moral anarchy, and accusations of hypocrisy would lose all their force. Those who expect to be accepted at their self-declared worth by others of like mind might at most, from

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time to time, confess to moral failure seen as a betrayal of their real self. Rousseau's *Confessions* is the acknowledged masterpiece of this technique. Hegel apparently expected these habits to become universal and he saw before him an unchecked anarchy of puffed-up hypocrites. He really believed that he was the last man to hate hypocrisy. In this he was utterly mistaken.

The assertive hypocrisy Hegel saw all around him was certainly spreading, but it was not novel. Hegel saw its beginnings in Jesuit casuistry. This he regarded as an authoritarian adjustment of conscience to circumstances, which was now simply left to the free discretion of the individual. That seems quite wrong also, for while good intentions were the excuse in both cases, the Jesuits did not exactly make a fetish of sincerity. The new hypocrisy makes sincerity its central virtue. In this it only exaggerates a part of conscience which was always present. Conscience demands both obedience to its rules and sincerity. It was never enough to do the right thing. One must, as in almsgiving, do it in the right spirit. When conscience lost its "objective content," as Hegel put it, sincerity came to rule alone.

Alceste, the self-centered misanthrope, was already in the moral state Hegel described, just as Tartuffe was the perfect representative of the naïve form; and even he already knew how to manipulate sincerity to his own advantage. He went in for self-abasement and verbal self-flagellation when he was caught seducing his patron's wife. As usual, this ploy proved successful, and Oronte was deeply impressed by this exposure of the inmost self. The difference between naïve and assertive hypocrisy, however, was not as clear and real at the time when Pascal and Molière dealt with the hypocrites they faced. According to Pascal, Jesuit "probabilism" taught that if any authority can be cited to justify an action, then it is permissible to perform it. Authority could be used to clear the conscience of the actor and free him from the fear of sin, whatever he did. Conscience now had new masters, and anything they considered "probably" good, was so. Tartuffe, the prince of hypocrites, immediately used these convenient doctrines in his armory of pious deceits:

> Heaven is not averse to compromise.
> There is a science, lately formulated,
> Whereby one's conscience may be liberated
> And any wrongful act you care to mention
> May be redeemed by purity of intention.

Tartuffe is relying on Jesuit science to help him in a seduction.

Both Pascal and Molière were convinced that conscience had reserves of fortitude with which it could defend itself against the appeal of these deceptions. Thus one of Molière's characters says with quiet confidence,

> Let's strive to live by conscience's clear decrees,
> And let the gossips gossip as they please.

Pascal's solution was the same: an appeal to conscience to remember the path of true morality and to reject the temptation to accept Jesuit excuses and laxity. Conscience was perceived as quite capable of dealing with hypocrisy. Hypocrisy was obviously no joke, but it was not taken as the primary evil, and indeed naïve hypocrisy is an attempt to hide a truly serious crime against God or man.

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Pascal was quite clear that when the Jesuits manipulated the consciences of their pliant clients this hypocrisy was designed to give the former the greatest empire of all: over the human mind. The real evil was not, however, the hypocrisy, but the abuse of power by the Jesuits. The doctrine of "probabilism," with its concentration on intentions and its easy supply of "good" ones, had terrible consequences. Men were induced to sin and so led to their perdition. The crime itself, not the hypocrisy, was for Pascal the real horror. Conscience could, however, defend itself effectively against this danger. It was the best cure for its diseases.

When conscience is reduced to sincerity it is futile to appeal to it against its own deceptions. The more Alceste insists on being true to himself, the more egotistical and misanthropic he becomes. To call upon the sincere to become even more so, only compounds their difficulties. What can sincerity do for Alceste, the professional antihypocrite, when he rails,

> Let men behave like men, let them display
> Their inmost hearts in everything they say.
> Let the heart speak, and let our sentiments
> Not mask themselves in silly compliments.

Alceste's demand for perfect sincerity hides nothing. It *is* the passion for moral domination. Sincerity would not possibly cure this *libido dominandi;* it would only aggravate it. His real self would merely assert itself more insistently, but in the same antihypocritical vein. That is why we are not sorry when he gets caught in the web of unhappiness he has woven. His friends did pity him, and appealed to his common sense. They at least still believed in their own consciences. Hegel saw a world where conscience was no longer supported by others of its own kind, identical or at least similar in content and structure. The sincere have no moral rules to share with each other, and would therefore only urge Alceste on in his solitary vices instead of rescuing him from them.

Although Hegel expected the anarchy of the sincere to bring about a general indifference to hypocrisy, he was, in fact, the herald of a veritable army of ferocious antihypocrites. The uncertainty and suspicion felt by those who are confronted, not merely by the affectations of the sincere, but also by the undiminished vigor of naïve hypocrisy, are overwhelming. Hegel was merely an early case. He described his and our situation only too accurately. It is not a world of sincere, authentic anarchists, bent solely on expressing their given heart or ego. Personal conviction is, to be sure, "the sole measuring rod of duty" for many people, but there are many other moral types around. An anarchy of the self-expressive does not prevail, although there are people who entertain with longing this psychological fantasy. The actual state of affairs is one of conflicting moral attitudes, among which rule-bound, conventional, and traditional ethics continue to hold their own. This mixture of anarchy and convention makes the interplay between hypocrisy and antihypocrisy extremely intense. For each one, to some extent, shares as much as he detests the inclinations of the other. They live together, affect each other, and must repeatedly accuse and justify themselves to each other. As Hegel noted, the pure in heart do not keep quiet, or just insist on their sincerity, but proclaim that whatever they do springs from the most noble motives, such as patriotism, pity, or creative genius. Others may see no trace of these traditional virtues in conduct

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which looks rebellious, boorish, and egotistical. They will say, as Hegel did, that this is just assertive hypocrisy; to which the sincere will reply that nothing is more so than the "sugary grin" of the conventionally polite and just. What we have to live with is a morally pluralistic world in which hypocrisy and counter-hypocrisy are joined to form a discrete system.

Hegel was, in fact, confronted by several moral phenomena which he did not quite sort out. First of all there was the new primacy of sincerity and the silence of conscience as a source of public moral knowledge. These changes were only too clear to Hegel. So was the inherent hostility of sincerity to all conventional rules, because these are the most powerful of all external threats to the unalloyed inner self. To respond to any appeal other than personal conviction is perceived as a betrayal. It is false, inauthentic, and hypocritical to abide by set rules, to seek public approval, to meet expectations, or simply to please others. The first voice to cry "hypocrite" in a pluralistic world is that of the sincere. The second voice is the response of the conventional, who are, as conscience has always been, also committed to sincerity, but not to the exclusion of other considerations. They do know enough about intentions to distrust the professions of the sincere, and they accuse them not merely of simple wrongdoing, but also of hypocrisy. Both sides measure the distance between assertion and performance and both say, "Hypocrisy." They are determined to undermine the confidence of those whose moral style offends them, because they can neither wholly accept nor reject each other. The charge of hypocrisy is the weapon of choice in a war between those who cannot do without public values which they must distrust, and those who rely on convention, but also insist on sincerity. Finally, to these opponents must be added those who, wearied by these wrangles, treat morality as a matter of taste. They see dogmatism, imposition, and aggressive hypocrisy everywhere. These perpetual fulminations against hypocrisy are, in short, an expression of massive moral confusion, and not the fault of any one of the participating dealers in moral goods. It is systematic, not occasional. And the hypocrite as a hated character has been replaced by hypocrisy as a universally hated insult. It is part of the language of distrust that uses threats rather than arguments.

Accusations of hypocrisy under these circumstances are not expressions of self-confidence. They are signs, rather, of a real moral insecurity, which can be seen readily by anyone who looks at the kaleidoscope of our sexual mores. Many people still believe, as did the Victorians, that chastity and monogamy are not just morally right, but the very essence of all morality. At the other end of the spectrum are those who think that sexual behavior is subject to no special rules. There are only preferences. The liberated see nothing but hypocrisy in the words of the staid. Even if the latter practiced what they preach, which it is said they rarely do, they would still be hypocritical, because monogamy is not sincere. It does not yield the constant love and pleasure that must mark the marriage of true minds. The Victorian is peculiarly vulnerable to these charges because he also believes in sincerity, but may well pretend to feelings he cannot summon up, and he may, in addition, be repressed and complacent. He therefore half agrees with his tormentors, who have done everything to undermine his self-confidence and nothing to show that he has injured or wronged anyone. In response, he will accuse the liberated of unfeeling and joyless promiscuity

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and of threatening the familial order. The liberated do not care about the latter complaint, so they are not disturbed, and may not even answer it. The indirect charge of hypocrisy is the only one that can touch them, for they do insist on the sincerity of their affections, even if they be fleeting, or at the very least claim to be having a very good time. In principle, a funless hedonist and an unfeeling experimenter are hypocritical, at least if they advertise the emotional openness of their style of life. Such extremes of sexual attitude are too remote from each other to be touched by direct moral attack, but to insinuate that someone is hypocritical is to collapse his self-image, and that has an effect. That is why the rigid and the liberated can so easily wound without altering one another. Each one feels threatened by sexual opinions that he can neither share nor completely reject. The liberated do not view Victorian sexual mores with the detached tolerance which they would bring to the habits of a distant primitive tribe. The Victorian shudders in undisguised disgust at the liberated, not only because he disapproves of them, but because he is not indifferent to the primacy of the sexual honesty they so loudly proclaim. If he cannot satisfy this demand within his code, he is exposed to self-doubt as much as to ridicule. The liberated are in the same boat, for they are still haunted by the possibility of enduring love. The conflict within stimulates a moral dispute in which the urge to exercise psychic dominion is undisguised.

That accusations of hypocrisy might be part of a contest for moral supremacy was clear from the first. It is characteristic of conscience and of sincerity, as well, to be expansive. Both tend to be private in origin, but public in their expression. The ostentatious almsgiver, so reviled for his hypocrisy in the New Testament, may well have been the unknowing victim of an imperial conscience. He was, after all, not doing anything wrong. On the contrary, he was helping the poor. If he did so in order to earn the approval of his fellow citizens, he may simply have been living up to the highest values of the pagan world. He may have been a Greek, not a Christian, and his generosity may have been deeply ethical. It did not, however, meet the standards of Christian charity. The established practices of his society were being challenged by conscience in revolt. The demand for secret charity might not have made any sense to this citizen, at home in his public culture. To call him hypocritical is something of a dodge. It does not indict what he is doing, but spurns the spirit in which he is going about his almsgiving. He is being undercut, rather than condemned for doing something reprehensible. Conscience in revolt is always likely to assert itself in this way against the defenders of any established order, and against the unreflective, habitual acceptance of a given social environment. Every evil ignored, conscience says, is an evil endorsed, which is why all conventionality is so hypocritical. That is why it is often the function of conscience, and always of sincerity, to be on poor terms with the laws and manners of actual societies. The plurality of moral accusers has only proliferated the verbal arms which conscience has always been ready to use against public mores that failed to meet its demands.

These tendencies of conscience are political, not just personal, in effect. It was inevitable that those whom conscience accosted should see aggression in sincerity and attribute hypocrisy to its claims to perfection. The best defense is a counterattack, but it is not enough. There is an element of political Podsnap-

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pery in all conventional hypocrisy that refuses to face the distance between established moral profession and practice. It is the hypocrisy that sustains established institutions and the self-satisfied people who run them and live for and off them. Such are the barons, with their talk about their honor. Such are all ruling classes. They must studiously ignore actuality, employing a self-protective rhetoric that supports their world. It is precisely people like Becket—outsiders—who are most likely to expose conventional hypocrisy such as this to contempt. In turn, these scourges of the insiders are very apt to resort to ideological causes, which may serve as counter-hypocrisies and perform highly integrative functions for them. When this cycle becomes an accepted form of politics, the habitual seesaw between competitive unmaskings and remaskings has set in. This is the pattern of ideological politics in liberal polities in which charges of hypocrisy are exchanged with unbroken regularity.

The shape of these politics was sensed even before it was realized. To Hegel, with his usual prescience, it seemed evident that ideological exchanges, in which each protagonist stands for a "cause," were the public equivalent of the new morally assertive hypocrisy. "Causes" act exactly like "good intentions." That is why the phrase "the end justifies the means" is not a mere tautology. "Causes" are the untestable promises of a good future that will liberate adherents from the responsibilities and constraints of the present ethical and legal order. This is often a very naïve sort of hypocrisy in which political con men clothe their crimes. On a large scale, it is how terrorist regimes and ideologists behave, and it is also how Tartuffe reigned over Oronte's distraught family. All opponents are traitors, the agents of dangerous racial, class, and national enemies against whom virtuous rulers are protecting a happy people. Even the most ardent antihypocrite may be more impressed by the crimes than by the hypocrisy of these regimes. The hypocrisy here is as naïve as it is secondary. On a lesser scale, that is also true of those noble causes that pursue improbable and distant goals. The purity of their aims, and the wickedness of actuality, combine to absolve their followers not only from their normal duties, but from accepting most facts. One might suppose that once this game of giving mischief fine names had been understood, its opponents would concentrate on the actual misdeeds. That is not likely, however, once a system of hypocrisy and counter-hypocrisy has become established. The glamor of good ends is too great for that, and contestants are reduced to seeking the "psychic annihilation" of their opponents by exposing their hypocrisy.

For the observer of the play of ideologies it is clear that the basic hypocrisy affecting all of them is the pretense that the ideological needs of the few correspond to the moral and material interests of the many. It is a hypocrisy to which all politically active intellectuals, who generally are also extreme antihypocrites, are especially given.[4] More impressive than these antics, however, is the endemic and systematic character of public hypocrisy and its mazelike inescapability. For the defenders of convention, who attack the self-righteous fraudulence of the political parties of new "causes," only sink into the swamp of their own hypocrisy in disguising the enormous gap between profession and behavior. That gap marks all established orders, and the counter-hypocrisy of the rebellious invariably feeds on it. The public stage, in short, collectively replays the struggles of the politics of daily life and vice versa. In the unending game of

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mutual unmasking, the general level of sham rises. As each side tries to destroy the credibility of its rivals, politics becomes a treadmill of dissimulation and unmasking. To call an opponent evil might boomerang, but he need only be unarmed by charges of hypocrisy.

The contribution of personal conscience, when it expresses itself on the public stage, does nothing to mitigate systematic hypocrisy. It sees hypocrisy everywhere, among politicians who habitually promise more than they can deliver, who profess beliefs they do not hold, and whose moral pretensions are intolerable. That is particularly so in liberal states, which are, in any case, the only open testing ground for conscience and all the possible ideologies. The revolt of private conscience against liberal governments is not in fact due to their exceptional depravity, but to the extraordinary hopes that liberalism once inspired and still sustains. Because its moral achievements have fallen short of these expectations, liberalism is accused of hypocrisy more frequently by its adherents than by its enemies. The latter in fact are often disappointed liberals.

To recapture some of the intensity of the moral aspiration of liberalism in the years before the First World War one need only read John Morley's celebrated essay "On Compromise." The author was a learned, influential, experienced, and excruciatingly high-minded Victorian. His earnest expectation was that freedom would shrink the purely political realm of compromise, caution, and calculation to minimal proportions. Free to ignore oppression, Morley concentrated on the deviousness of politicians, in and out of office. They were a real danger to the dauntless pursuit of truth, the highest of human obligations, upon which all human improvement depended. The end of striving was progress, and it was the nonpolitical intellect that would achieve it, if it was not fettered by the temptations of politics. Hypocrisy was the very greatest of dangers, not only to truth, but even to politics. Morley could endure the compromises that liberty itself imposed on politicians, who could not force improvements on those who were unready for them or who could not accept them. But the art of the possible must not be artful. It must not be hypocritical, as the political spirit, with its eye ever on "the immediately feasible," was apt to be. That is why liberalism, the faith in progress through freedom, must reduce the scope of the political until it is replaced by something less dangerous to freedom. A dramatic decline in hypocrisy was bound to come when people engaged in vigorous and free discussion. There would be less irresponsible "pharisaical censoriousness" when everyone came to recognize the difference between disagreement, disapproval, and punishment. Morley's intellectual puritanism was clearly as singleminded as the sexual obsessions of his fellow Victorians. In any event, the free competition of moral ideas did not reduce either censoriousness, politics, or hypocrisy. On the contrary, it enhanced them, because freedom does not screen off, but liberates the political spirit to grow unchecked. The hopes that liberalism aroused have not been realized and its adherents feel defrauded because they can no longer be as confident as Morley was so long ago.

The reaction to representative democracy as a working political system was even more intense than the gradual erosion of liberal hope. American representative democracy was meant to be unlike other governments in all ways, not only in some. The difference proved to be insufficiently great and the actuality was perceived as fraudulent. In fact, representative democracy must, like any

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form of government, maintain its legitimacy by reinforcing the ideological values upon which it is based. Not only must these be invoked on all possible occasions, but they must serve as the justification for specific policies. These norms go well beyond the sources of legal authority, especially when derived from a document, however revered, like the U.S. Constitution. The Constitution itself is imbedded in less explicit, but no less binding, principles and sentiments. No one can hope to govern without reference to these values. It is neither psychologically feasible nor politically possible to evade them when every utterance is sure to receive close public scrutiny. That means that those engaged in governing must assume at the very least two roles, one of pursuing policies and another of edifying the governed in order to legitimize these plans. The more widely shared a political language and other traditions are, the easier this is. There is nevertheless a built-in tension; for the disparity between what is said and what is done remains great, and the better the speaker the larger that distance is likely to be. The gap exists in every association, not only in political units. No one lives up to a collective ideal. This is the fatality on which Machiavelli capitalized, and on which his political honesty thrived. And those, of whom there are many, who do not accept the legitimizing norms at all, will use hypocrisy as their most telling accusation.

One cannot, however, govern with overt antihypocrisy as one's only rule of conduct. Antihypocrisy is a splendid weapon of psychic warfare, but not of government. Nevertheless, it does point its finger at a perpetual difficulty. The best politicians are those who can both reinforce the ideology upon which their authority is based, and devise adequate policies. But very few are equally adept at both. Even those who are, are peculiarly subject to charges of hypocrisy and to debunking. Such was the fate of both Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt. Each one was able to use rhetoric and showmanship to give a new vigor to flagging political principles and loyalties. With that, they also raised the level of moral and political expectations. They failed to fulfill the standards they had themselves revived. Other presidents were not expected to achieve so much, but they had also made fewer claims for the political order with which they were identified. Hence the endless accusations of hypocrisy that pursue the most capable statesmen.

Without ancestor worship or divine providence to rely on, modern liberal democracy has little but its moral promise to sustain it. That is why it generates both political exigency and the interplay of hypocrisy and vocal antihypocrisy. In international relations this is perhaps less of an issue than has been claimed. All governments know that whatever the rules, if any, that apply among states, they are not those of personal morality. *Salus populi suprema est lex* is as democratic a slogan as any, and with varying degrees of success it has always been recognized. It is in the relationship between government and citizens that hypocrisy is said to flourish to an abnormal degree in liberal democracy. That is because its basic norm is the consent of the governed, and consent is not easily won or preserved.

A people is not just a pure political entity, as was once hoped. Parties, organized campaigns, and leaders make up the reality, if not the promise, of electoral regimes. In the back-and-forth of competing charges and countercharges which is both the action as well as the specific end of any election, there

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certainly is a fund of hypocrisy. Elections are rituals in function and in form, and the choice of parts is fairly limited. The pretenses therefore are standardized, and the conventions of exposing them are equally predictable. The voters' expectations are not, as a rule, particularly great, and their tolerance for eccentricities and departures from the script is low. That is why some Americans, as soon as they discovered that their government was not as unique as they had expected, tended to see hypocrisy everywhere. Hawthorne was not the first Jacksonian to see that America was not as different as had been expected, but he was the most literate. He was also more intensely preoccupied by a sense of ubiquitous hypocrisy. He spared no one, not his friends, nor himself, nor those whom he disliked. He was the greatest artist since Molière to make hypocrisy his main theme. The pretension was simple: the people ruled. In fact, they did not, they only played a role in elections, and the claims for post-Revolutionary republican government were exaggerated. It was in some ways superior, and in others inferior, to the Puritan authoritarianism of an earlier age. No regrets and no enthusiasms; for in both hypocrisy flourished, not to mention the vices to which all men are prone, especially greed and cruelty. That much cannot be helped, only recognized. However, styles in guile change, and electioneering has its own kind. Consider Hawthorne's Judge Pyncheon, privately as wicked as can be, in public a pillar of the community. He expects to be elected governor of the state.

> As is customary with the rich, when they aim at the honors of a republic, he apologized, as it were, to the people, for his wealth, prosperity, and elevated station, by a free and hearty manner towards those who knew him; putting off the more of his dignity in due proportion with the humbleness of the man whom he saluted, and thereby proving a haughty consciousness of his advantages as infrangibly as if he had marched forth preceded by a troup of lackeys to clear the way.

"Proving" it, in any case, to a man as sensitive to sham as Hawthorne. Pyncheon, like Tartuffe, is utterly wicked, and his private and primary hypocrisy hides the immense wrong he did in sending his innocent cousin to jail. Hawthorne, however, hints that the qualities acquired in lifelong domestic and family brutality and meanness are just those most likely to make a successful republican politician, for neither the voters nor those who know the candidate for what he really is can act effectively. "A little knot of subtle schemers will control the convention and, through it, dictate to the parties." In fact, their measures will "steal from the people without its knowledge, the power of choosing its own rulers." What they like is a safe man of visible public irreproachability and "spotless private character." To suit them one would have to be a hypocrite; though, to be sure, Judge Pyncheon is in a class by himself. Hawthorne's Jacksonian friends were not without their own hypocrisies. They also wanted to rule. The current quarrel between those who see democracy as a system of citizen participation and those who are content with it as a system of leadership selection, is just the latest rerun of that earlier script. And it is as evident now as then, that "the people" so ardently championed is not an actual, but an invented, entity. Hawthorne, as an artist, however, was able to express the immense disappointments that representative democracy must inspire when

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it becomes an ongoing system of government. Its workings force participants to promise a moral order that nobody can create. Elections must be prepared, and candidates, especially rich and clever ones, are bound to pretend to a common touch, youthful poverty, and inordinate virtue. That is the bleak side of the picture, and Hawthorne, like all the great American novelists, had an eye for darkness. It was only to be expected that he would soon see it among the reformers of his age as well.

The advantages of a system that seems to produce hypocrisy like a kettle giving off steam also were recognized very early. Hawthorne concentrated on hypocrisy because it had destroyed the specifically democratic hope. But how much frankness does democracy actually require? No one can accuse even the most democratic of the founders of the republic, Benjamin Franklin, of political enthusiasm. He was a shrewd calculator who took it for granted that the politics of persuasion required hypocrisy. The only alternative, as he well knew, was force. Yet Franklin did not for a moment underrate the political changes he had worked for in Pennsylvania. He had done much to create a wholly new political society based on a civic consciousness in which self-improvement and practical philanthropy were joined. This transformation did not require zeal, only guile and persistence. And Franklin was capable of both. He was also tolerant and easygoing, as a matter of principle, and in this he very much resembled David Hume, who could say quite simply of hypocrisy that "the common duties of society usually require it" and that it was "impossible to pass through the world without it." Both were glad enough to have escaped from the rigors of the congregation and of the kirk, and not inclined to torment themselves or others with the fears they had so recently left behind them. That a public man should try to make himself acceptable to his fellow-citizens did not strike Franklin as despicable; on the contrary, he carefully taught himself to hide much of his native character.

Franklin was, by any standards, a great man. He always knew that about himself. In his *Autobiography*, which is itself a very artful work, he tells us that he realized that he would have to play a very difficult part if he was to succeed in Pennsylvania politics. To get his many projects through he had to acquire a new vocabulary and a new personality.

> I even forbid myself . . . the Use of every Word or Expression in the Language that imported a fix'd Opinion; such as *certainly, undoubtedly,* etc. and I adopted instead of them, *I conceive, I apprehend,* or *I imagine* a thing to be so or so. . . . The modest way in which I propos'd my Opinions, procur'd them a readier Reception and less Contradiction. . . . [This] Mode, which I at first put on, with some violence to natural Inclination, became at length . . . easy . . . to me. . . . And to this Habit I think it principally owing, that I had . . . so much Influence in public Councils.

This was done in a spirit of cool calculation without any claim to humility. As Franklin noted, humility was quite beyond him; he would only be proud of it if he were to try it. Here is hypocrisy as a conscious act in response to a situation that demands it. Persuasion is not natural; it requires a great deal of effort, and in a man as superior to his fellows as Franklin was, it takes exactly what he described. It was a mark of Franklin's greatness that he always knew what was

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called for and could do what he thought right. He was at all times, Jefferson wrote to his grandson, "the most amiable of men," because his rule was "never to contradict anybody." What strikes one about the *Autobiography* is its complete lack of sentimentality. Franklin had a pronounced character which he presented very acutely, but he did not think of himself as primarily a unique inner self. He was all his many roles, although he put the first one above all others, as he wrote in his testament: "I, Benjamin Franklin, of Philadelphia, printer, late Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the court of France, now President of Pennsylvania." There is much pride of achievment in this, but no vanity at all. It is also a wholly social ego. Franklin was still of Molière's mind.

A democratic "social fabric" would "come undone" just as quickly as any other if everyone were always "wholly frank with everyone." The distance between Franklin and Hawthorne is immense. Franklin was the sum of his actions, while Hawthorne and we have romantic egos which cannot bear the notion that one's manner of acting one's roles measures true character. For Hawthorne there was a private self that was one's true, supreme, and only honest part. That is why he thought it important to take "the private and domestic view of public men," and why the discrepancy between the two made him so bitter. For Franklin the domestic self was one among several. No remnants of an immortal soul bothered him, and he needed no replacement for it. His private affections were not politically relevant. Perhaps Pascal's Jesuit adversaries had a point when they argued that they simply did not want to make men desperate, that each condition had its peculiar vices, and that life, and religion as well, could be made more tolerable for priests, gentlemen, commercial people, and the poor by easing their consciences as they went about their appointed tasks. The necessity of assuming social roles is not only inevitable; it does not merit, apart from the notion of a supreme ego, the charge of hypocrisy, for it does not hide a public crime. Franklin was not a con man; he disguised his enormously superior intelligence, not some secret vice. To be sure, he did mean to dominate, but it was within the confines of the political stage where the question isn't to rule or not to rule, but how shall one rule? If it is to be by persuasion, then Franklin had to find the right tone, which was extremely hard for a man so much better informed and so much more intelligent than his colleagues. His example is so important because it has both political and psychological meaning. He saw with perfect clarity what the demands of democratic assemblies were, even in their infancy. He also recognized what personal behavior it imposed upon him before the new morality of the supreme inner self had insinuated itself into every mind. He could therefore describe his pretenses with perfect self-confidence and good humor, knowing that he was contributing to a new and better political order. That also accounts for the charges of hypocrisy and calculation that Melville, D. H. Lawrence, and lesser romantics were to hurl at him in a later age. Did they, then, possess moral and political knowledge he lacked?

In one respect, Franklin's example is highly misleading, because he was a man of extraordinary strength of character as well as of immense intelligence. It was easy for him to be one man among his peers in the Royal Society, another in the small, provincial world of Philadelphia politics, and a third at Versailles. Always aware of the huge social distance he had covered since his impoverished

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childhood in Boston, he was simply pleased, and not at all upset, by the changes he had experienced or, to be exact, created for himself. Others have found social mobility more difficult to absorb. The result is that democratic regimes are beset by two forms of the antihypocritical mentality. One is endemic in any openly competitive political system, and necessarily so. The other may arise from the psychological difficulties of social mobility, up, down, or lateral. The first kind of hypocrisy is part of the rhetoric of legitimization and of the politics of persuasion. They not only demand dissimulation, but generate disappointment, and a sense of being put upon. Given that democratic freedom means, to use Madison's phrase, "the right of animadversion," the exposure of these apparent hypocrisies becomes inevitable. Liberal democracy is a process that requires particularly obvious and vulnerable hypocrisies, and that invariably invites a perpetual anxious suspicion of fraud and hypocrisy. Franklin was a participant in this system, but his was not the mentality of the later consumers and beneficiaries of this extremely complex polity. We, however, still share Hawthorne's political sensibility, while Franklin's is utterly remote from us. One of the necessary by-products of liberalism—social mobility—had, moreover, not yet revealed all its possibilities in Franklin's age. It brought with it a second sense of universal hypocrisy. Franklin's astronomical rise was as unique socially as was his personal acceptance of it. It is, however, likely that the romantic obsession with the true inner self and with the hypocrisy of playing social roles is related to the personal experience of social movement which became less rare in the nineteenth century, especially among the intellectually gifted. Romantic morality may reflect much of the anguish of people who leave the social world of their childhood behind them and adopt new manners and roles. The true inner self is identified with one's childhood and family, and regret as well as guilt for having left them behind may render new ways artificial, false, and in some way a betrayal of that original self. This personal self is seen as having a primacy that no later social role can claim, and indeed the latter may be despised as demeaning, "stereotyped," or simply "fake," but in any case less genuine than the primordial self.

The malaise of the socially mobile may be more severe in more rigidly castelike societies than among the sons of newly enriched fathers in America, but it was not unknown here. The pain may have been less acute, but it has been more common. There is, consequently, another source of antihypocritical feeling generated by a liberal social environment: the morality of those who regard the assumption of diverse and contradictory roles—the necessity of playing many parts and taking directions from a variety of social circles—as hypocritical dissimulation, even though no particular evil is done. It would be entirely erroneous to see the psychological uneasiness of the mobile as the sole, or even the chief, source of romantic morality. The pure inner self has many, far earlier antecedents. We need only recall its source in conscience and its display by Alceste. The spread of romanticism, however, occurring as it does from the nineteenth century onward, is not unrelated to it and to the anger against all sham and social show. The mentality of this kind of antihypocrite surely has some relation to the plurality of groups that individuals move into and out of in liberal societies.

In addition to romanticism, there is the egalitarian component of liberalism, which harbors a strong aversion to the hypocrisy implicit in established social

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roles. If men accept themselves as the sum of their roles, it is said, then they are doomed to inequality. Even equality before the law, so central to liberalism, must give way to status. Only if we assume that there is a self, apart from all social definition, which is capable of morality and therefore deserves respect, can we justify the claims of equality on which not only social justice, but liberty itself, also depend. Hypocrisy is seen in the denial of that inner self, of the source of sincerity and common humanity, and therefore it appears to be the weapon of the beneficiaries of a hierarchical class- and role-obsessed society. These feelings of revulsion against artificiality as the handmaiden of an unjust inequality are certainly intense, but are they reasonable? Is this sort of anti-hypocrisy well considered, even from an egalitarian point of view? Does equality not have more to gain from a flexible attitude to all roles, to easy transitions from role to role, and to a multiplicity of roles for each citizen? Why not consider a possibly hypocritical appreciation of all legitimate roles and conditions? Hypocrisy can do as much for equality as it does for inequality. If we had some notions of a public good, if we had a shared body of common political knowledge, we would not dwell on hypocrisy as an issue of any importance. We would defend and attack inequality in terms of our collective life and its prospects. But even the most ardent egalitarian is by now baffled by what the respective scope of public and private roles or spheres should be. That is why he prefers to rest his case for equality on common humanity, on "a man's a man for a' that," rather than on the possible advantages of an egalitarian social order for most citizens. Instead, he sees aristocratic artificialities and sinister designs in the very idea of men as role players. Would frankness, conceived as the display of a primary inner self, really do anything for equality? Only if one assumes that each individual does and must invariably play only one role and that roles must be ordered in rigid hierarchies. That is by no means the case, and if we had a greater parity among roles, the extrasocial self as the primary moral agent would lose all egalitarian ideological force. It makes it all the more worth asking whether public and private roles call for identical conduct.

In fact, we assume that our public roles carry greater moral responsibilities than our private ones. We expect to behave better as citizens and public officials than as actors in the private sphere. The whole concern about corruption in government turns on that, and it does yield immense hypocrisy, but pretended virtue may curtail graft and other vices as well. It is, for example, no longer acceptable to make racist and anti-Semitic remarks in public in America; yet in private conversation, racism and anti-Semitism are expressed as freely and as frequently as ever. Many a Southerner used to sneer at this display of hypocrisy. Now even he, like many a Northerner, is down to a few code words at election time. Would any egalitarian prefer more public frankness? Should our public conduct really mirror our private, inner selves? Often our public manners are better than our personal laxities. That "sugary grin" is, in any case, not a serious issue. It becomes so only because our sense of public ends is so wavering and elusive.

No occasion reveals our incoherence more than war. War is of course a very commonplace situation, but it is an extreme one. It disrupts the delicate balance of pluralistic societies and radicalizes everyone, as hard-won restraints and inhibitions give way under unendurable pressures. That is why war is psychologically and morally so revealing, as all readers of Thucydides know. In our age it

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is also the occasion on which charges of hypocrisy may be exchanged with unmatched virulence. The morally smug begin to rant, the assertive to rail. That this spectacle should morally reassure anyone is surely astonishing, yet Michael Walzer in his remarkable book *Just and Unjust Wars* finds comfort both in the efforts of soldiers and politicians to conceal their misdeeds and in their relentless unmaskers. Indeed the whole interplay between the hypocrite and his pursuers is seen as a sign of shared moral knowledge. "The exposure of hypocrisy," Walzer writes, "is certainly the most ordinary and it may also be the most important form of moral criticism," for it shows that both the critic and his target share at least some "commitment that goes deeper than partisan allegiance and the emergencies of the battle." When these "deeper" engagements are broken, moral indignation should be expressed, and when lame excuses are offered, the cry of "hypocrite" should be heard loud and clear. It should, in Walzer's view, be heard when war is declared unjustly and when in the course of wars the rules of warfare are disregarded by soldiers and statesmen, who then offer false justifications for their actions. This is surely an odd view, for while charges of hypocrisy may occur in a context of such moral consensus, there is no reason whatsoever to suppose that wartime and postwartime differ from peacetime in this respect. The conditions of moral confusion and ideological conflict are the same. Those who must unmask their opponents are reduced to undermining their moral and political prestige because, having no shared commitments, they cannot reach them directly. That is clear enough in the course of unpopular wars and even after those wars that were generally accepted. For wherever there is political freedom there are recriminations.

The very notion of wars as either just or unjust is by no means universally accepted. Just-war theory places war at the end of a continuum that has the harmonious consensual community at its other extreme. War is not outside the rules of law and morality, but is their extension into a disastrous extremity. As such it remains a normal, rule-governed collective activity. For those who follow some version of Kant's doctrine, however, war is beyond the rules of good and evil, just and unjust. It falls in the realm of pure necessity, where the impulse to self-preservation extinguishes the very possibility of justice. It is the world of kill or be killed and of the perpetual "fear of violent death." In war, the moral law as a set of binding rules is as silent as are all other laws. The only remaining imperative is to end it as soon as possible, and in such a way as to avoid its recurrence. War, in this view, is not an extreme moral situation; it is wholly devoid of any moral compensations. Even wars of survival are not just—merely inevitable. The Kantian is very likely to accuse the just-war theorist of Machiavellian hypocrisy, an encouragement to enter upon wars recklessly and then to baptize one's own side with the holy water of justice. Every enemy can easily be made to look the aggressor. The just-war theorist will not hesitate long before he in turn accuses the Kantian of Machiavellian hypocrisy, because those who declare wars to be hell fight them with unrestrained savagery. Both charges are quite justified in that they point to the characteristic temptation that is most likely to undo each one. In neither case is the theory of the other shown to be erroneous. These charges of hypocrisy about war become systematic precisely because each side must justify itself to the other in terms of its sincerity, since

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neither can shake the other's convictions about the substance of their disagreement: the status of war as such. Indeed, there is nothing new about such quarrels. Becket and the barons were already engaged in that sort of conflict. Becket no longer had any use for the notion of war as the noblest sport of gentlemen, while the barons were repelled by the idea of war as the pursuit of royal profit and power. What they lacked in that moment of confrontation was shared moral knowledge of any kind whatever. Each side looks for the psychological soft spot of the other and aims at that. Then each is accused of hypocrisy, which is merely a failure to live up to its own standards, not a failure to meet common obligations.

Since they do not see the same moral scene, they can at most blame each other for blindness, which seems hardly adequate in times of extraordinary stress. Instead, each one tries to dismiss and devalue the other by calling him a hypocrite. Obviously this imputation does not imply shared knowledge, but mutual inaccessibility. In fact, the contempt for hypocrisy is the only common ground that remains, and that is what renders these accusations so effective. Indeed, for those who cannot bear the thought of even appearing hypocritical, pure realism offers the most inviting resort. A conscience in revolt against its own feebleness and self-deceptions may prefer an overt pose of amoralism. War is, for this pure realist, inherent in political life, and is to be pursued whenever it seems advantageous. Excuses and justifications have no place in his vocabulary. Here honesty takes its revenge on every other claim conscience might bring up. For all its seeming lack of scruple, this is, however, a highly moral awareness that forces itself on those who, like Hegel and others, have been driven to distraction by a sense of universal, overwhelming hypocrisy. It is within the systematic hypocrisy of ideological politics that this pure realism invariably flourishes. It smells opinion parading as knowledge, prejudice demanding the assent that only the findings of the natural sciences now command, and self-advertisement calling itself truth. Few thoughtful people have not had these reactions at one time or another.

These forms of discourse about the moral character of war also arise in arguments about the conduct of actual wars. Walzer is particularly concerned with the rules that might apply within wars, and it is here that the charge of hypocrisy seems most significant to him as a proof of moral knowledge. Who can escape the charge of hypocrisy under these conditions? One might think that a suicidal pacifist who endures death passively and who refuses to enter the gate to hell might be spared accusations of war crimes. He does not, however, escape the charge of hypocrisy. His motives will be scrutinized, his psyche worked over, and he will be found to be a moral show-off trying to cover up some private weakness with a fanatic public display that hinders the war effort, prolongs the war, and constitutes, if not a crime, certainly a fault. The honest Machiavellian, who openly rejects the very idea of rules within wars, is far more likely to evade antihypocritical censure; though, as we shall see, Walzer singles him out as a very likely hypocrite. The honest Machiavellian is, of course, a very rare bird. As an honest man he is not a genuine Machiavellian, one who would lie, cheat, and pretend to every degree of piety. Most practicing Machiavellians fall prey to self-deceptions and self-excuse. A completely self-aware and open amoralist is

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very hard to imagine. Such a prodigy is more likely to appear on the stage than in history. Becket, when we first meet him, adopts that stance, but he cannot keep it up, and ends as a saint of sorts. If the pure Machiavellian strategist is immune to the charge of hypocrisy, it is because he never made a moral commitment at all. As Becket has it, a soldier means to win. He may frequently, as Walzer reminds us, propose strategic military necessity when he is, in actuality, merely promoting his own career. To Walzer this is the very essence of hypocrisy in time of war. From a purely strategic point of view it simply does not matter, for if the strategist's conduct is effective, his motives are nobody's business but his own. Hypocrisy is not an issue at all, and neither is sincerity. If the Machiavellian soldier loses his battle, he may be tried for incompetence, but not for hypocrisy. Only consequences matter here, and in principle he should have been able to calculate these correctly. In practice it is, of course, no easier to make exact calculations about matters of fact than to attain a knowledge of the good and beautiful. It is not hypocritical to fail, however: merely inept, which, to the Machiavellian, is the supreme evil. Becket is telling those barons to go out and win intelligently and cruelly, and not to lose expensively in a gentlemanly sort of way. In Becket's kind of war, personal motives mean nothing and performance is everything. Failure carries its own rewards. As long as he was an honest Machiavellian he recognized that the way to avoid hypocrisy was to eschew moral pretensions altogether and to get the business over with as quickly and effectively as possible. The reason Walzer is so anxious to see hypocrisy among these hard-boiled types is not because he finds them deeply committed to his values, but because they so chillingly reject them.

In fact, Walzer can make a plausible case of hypocrisy against the strategist only because of the conditions and effects of pluralism. Faced with publics that do not share his approach to war or political combat, the strategist pleads necessity and takes other measures to evade criticisms. That hardly implies that he accepts the validity of these reproofs, especially as they usually come after the event. The fact that the sense of military necessity is more urgent during war than when it is all over renders these exchanges peculiarly artificial. The strategist sees hypocrisy in the retrospective moralist who never had to bear the burdens of instant choice, and who now feels safe to charge him with gross brutality and hypocrisy. These arguments, however, easily become an integral part of normal ideological discourse in free societies. What was and was not a military necessity is as much subject to differences of interpretation as any other policy in dispute, and it is readily absorbed by the system until it is replaced by some more immediately striking subject of controversy and new charges of hypocrisy.

The world of ideological conflict and moral confusion does make hypocrisy its most effective verbal weapon, but it is simply not for the reasons that Walzer suggests. The situation he contemplates is not, to be sure, a personal fantasy. In the classical age of *raison d'état*, matters were exactly as he describes them. Jansenists and *dévots* might well have called Cardinal Richelieu a hypocrite when he defended his alliance with Protestant powers on religious and moral grounds. How, after all, can anyone claim to defend the true faith by encouraging and arming heretics? The paid apologists of the cardinal were political con men and

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their master was a very wicked man. They were condemned not only by the views of zealots, but by their own; for they were all religious men holding the same beliefs. Here the traditional sanction of moral outrage is indeed a proof of moral knowledge. As we saw, the *dévots*, like all puritans, suffered from hypocrisies of their own, but that is not the point here. When they accused Richelieu of hypocrisy, both knew exactly what was at stake: a betrayal of the faith for merely political ends, thinly veiled by the excuses churned out by paid scribblers. When everyone really knows a policy to be absolutely wrong, disguises can be ripped off to reveal the intolerable, and so may bring the errant soldier and politician back to a state of rectitude. It is not at all surprising that "naïve" hypocrisy became such a great issue in the age of the nascent modern state. This is the world of Pascal and Molière and events do much to explain the intensity of their interest in hypocrisy. Neither then nor now, however, is there any reason to rejoice in these acrimonious outbursts. That is what Molière appreciated so fully. His fear of Tartuffe did not mellow his contempt for Alceste. One can condemn the ruthless strategist without embracing the righteous warrior. One might appeal to common sense, if not to conscience, to put the con men into jail, and still say with Alceste's intelligent and good-natured friend,

> In certain cases it would be uncouth
> And most absurd to speak the naked truth
> With all respect for your exalted notions
> It is often best to veil ones true emotions.
> Wouldn't the social fabric come undone
> If we were wholly frank with everyone?

In the world of systematic hypocrisy and counter-hypocrisy such resources of personal sanity as his no longer prevail. Those who make accusations of hypocrisy no longer aim at the dissolution of all artificial social bonds, nor are their targets as sensible as Alceste's friends. Both sides are alike—engaged in an interminable struggle in which neither possesses anything that can pass for moral knowledge. Indeed, when the normal situation of pluralism is upset, and some degree of moral unity prevails, the cry of hypocrisy is no longer heard, because no one is out to "psychically annihilate" or to unmask the opposition. One need only remember the Second World War to understand that.

The Second World War was not the Thirty Years War which Richelieu came to orchestrate, and so it yields different memories. There were no cries of hypocrisy on the English-speaking side during the years of struggle. It was a unique period of moral certainty and assurance. Hitler was so awful, so obviously a *summum malum*, that his effect was that of a temporarily unifying, shared *summum bonum*. The brief moral knowledge shared was that Hitler had to be defeated. Within the circumference of this ideological unity the talk was entirely strategic: how to win. As for Hitler, his sincerity was hardly an issue, although it seems to have concerned some Americans in the thirties. When one really knows that someone is evil one has no time for his possible hypocrisy. One also does not accuse people with whom one shares an overriding aim. Lord Cherwell's critics challenged only his estimates, not his motives, when, during the war, they objected to the massive bombing of working-class neighborhoods

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in German cities. Other disagreements were also couched in similarly neutral terms. The memory of those five years has had its effect on hypocrisy and counter-hypocrisy. Among those too young to recall them, there is a longing to relive what seems like a heroic moral condition. The young see a complacent hypocrisy in that older generation that cannot or will not recognize anything quite resembling that battle in all the many conflicts that have followed it. The old see only a callow hypocrisy among the young who demand their adherence to causes that do not even reawaken the memory of that earlier war.

When the Second World War was over, the normal process of recriminations naturally resumed its course. It had always been more than one war. In Britain it had been a war of imperial survival and a war against fascism. The intelligent and enlightened members of the traditional ruling class assumed the leadership of Britain at war, and the antifascists, overwhelmingly intellectuals of the Left, fell into line. Even during the war there were strains, over an early second front, for instance. However, it was only after the war that Lord Snow questioned Lord Cherwell's character and that Evelyn Waugh wrote *The End of the Battle*—which expressed the feelings of those who were appalled by the adulation of Stalin. In retrospect it seemed to the most ardent of antifascist warriors that they had lost their moral purity, while those who had fought to save their country felt that they had lost their honor to their allies. What had and had not been necessary became the subject of dispute, and each side accused the other of bad faith and a revolting hypocrisy.

Within our situation of systematic hypocrisy the older naïve hypocrite and antihypocrite have not disappeared. They continue to flourish. Con men still meet their match. Alceste is also with us, and his followers, all devoted to perfect candor, are indeed unhappy with every "social fabric." Anarchists in feeling if not in fact, they are no threat to any historical society, because they must either try solitude, like Alceste, or join in the accepted pattern of antihypocritical political behavior that sustains a liberal order. In other societies their prospects are too poor to bear description. The cynics, driven by ideological politics to reject all public standards as mere sham, are in the same position. Disappointed idealists, they are a small, cerebral group as a rule, and honesty driven to its limits has taken them out of politics and even out of current moral life. The only voice that damns hypocrisy to some purpose is one that laments that the society in which we live does not live up to its principles, promises, and possibilities. This outraged jeremiad is the mark of a moralistic rather than a moral society perhaps, but it is not without effect, because this type of antihypocrite does at least have a sense of what is wrong, rather than only an urge to spread the blame. He may well frighten politicians enough to inhibit them to a significant degree. Even the participants in the system of hypocrisy and counter-hypocrisy perform unintended services to liberal societies. Each fears the other enough to restrain himself. Their discourse conveys little moral urgency, but it does discourage fanaticism. The politics of unreconciled political neighbors are not as liberating as earlier liberals had hoped, not as edifying as had been expected, and certainly far less democratic, but they make for a society superior to its known alternatives. It could hardly survive without hypocrisy.

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REFERENCES

[1]All quotations from Molière are taken from Richard Wilbur's admirable translation.

[2]My reading of *Tartuffe* owes much to Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, translated by Willard Trask (New York: Doubleday, 1957), pp. 316-347. As Auerbach notes, La Bruyère's Onuphre is a "purer" hypocrite, having no other designs or passions, but he also is a con man specializing in legacies.

[3]I am much indebted to Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

[4]For an adroit and wry review of all these pretensions, see the chapter "Hypocrisy" in Theodore Zeldin, *France 1848-1917*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 1121-1153.

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STANLEY CAVELL

Epistemology and Tragedy: A Reading of Othello

(Together with a cover letter)

Dear Alceste,

THEY'RE THINKING ABOUT YOU AGAIN, the good ones. Can you imagine why? I will not disguise from you my conviction that your position is intellectually indefensible. What more really can you say on your behalf but that human society is filled with show, with artifice, with insincerity, with dissociations between the public and the private, between the outer and the inner? And what more really need be said in reply to you than to concede this, and whatever follows from it, as the nature of human society, as the very essence of the civilized; and then simply request that you—what? Let us not say either love civilization or leave it. The request is rather that you not be illogical: if you do decide to join the human race; or let me say, to take your place in society; then do not complain that you will not by that act have rejoined the world of nature. It need not be denied that in this decision something is lost. But need you deny that something is gained, something indeed human? To see these two sides is just to grow up, something you are heartily advised to do.

Why is this not the end of the matter? The fact that it is not the end is what I take the issue of hypocrisy to be about, what it is that keeps it an issue. The issue is not so much why you are not convinced by the better arguments of the others. That sort of impasse is hardly news in human affairs. The issue is rather why the others care that you are not convinced. You are without power. What is your hold upon them? What do you represent to them?

Perhaps you imagine that you represent purity to their compromise and corruption. I think it would be closer to the truth to say that you represent purity to their purity, or to their sense of their purity lost—not as if corrupted exactly but as if misplaced, thus still present somehow. Purity and innocence are no doubt dangerous ingredients in society, rarely making a bad situation as good as it can be, often making it as bad as it can be, unable to listen to reason. But like virginity itself, innocence ought to be put aside in its own good time; which is to say, in a time and place of its own consent. In a happy world purity will itself know its time and its place. But suppose it does not? Suppose that the world is not happy. Purity can only know by its own heart and by the encouragement of what draws it. So if I maintain the right of experience to its argu-

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ments for consent, I equally maintain the right of innocence to give and to withhold its consent without argument, on the basis of its feeling, its sense of itself. The world needs that sense, requires that you say, willingly, that the world is good enough to want to live in. And I assume that in general you, in general youth, wish to want the world; which is to say: you wish to be presented with a world you can want, to which you give yourself. Why would you not?

Let us leave aside the possibility that you are neurotic, or tyrannical. Let us assume that you may be right, that the world as it is, is not wantable, or not acceptable. Let us also leave aside the possibility that you are a victim of political injustice, either privately or as the member of a victimized class or race. In so much as acknowledging that there may be room left, beyond private or public injustice, for refusing the world, I am, you see, showing the side of me that sides with you. (This implies that there is a part of me that parts with you. I'll come to that.) Then what room is left? How could the world as a whole present itself, to one's feeling, as uninhabitable? *What* is the feeling?

Evidently it must be understood as a mode of disgust, a repugnance at the idea that your life should partake of the world's, that what it does, you do; or is it at the idea that the world's life partakes of yours, that what you feel, it feels? I am not going to try now to define further or to assess such ideas. I am writing merely to reaffirm that I believe in the potential epistemological significance of this mode of disgust (recognizing always, as one always has to add in our day, that the significance may only be psychological, as if we knew what distinction we had in mind). Like Hamlet before you (with his sensitivity to odor, to the rotting), and like the romantics and the existentialists after you, you represent the discovery of adolescence, of that moment at which the worth of adulthood is—except, I suppose, to deep old age—most clearly exposed; at which adulthood *is* the thing you are asked to choose, to consent to. Naturally your choice will be based on insufficient evidence. But woe to them that believe the choice is easy, that in foregoing adolescence you forego little of significance. They have merely forgotten what they have lost, as they have forgotten the loss of childhood, a matter of comparable significance. (Freud, to whom you should be introduced, means something like this, or ought to mean it, by speaking of human sexual development as having two phases, the second of which, after a period of latency, recapitulates the first.)

The idea here, that when the world's legitimacy comes to rest upon consent—when the public world is something that each individual has at some moment to agree to join—that then adolescence is invented as the time of preparing for that agreement, and is ended by it; this idea is confirmed in the thought of hypocrisy, a word which says something about playing a role but which at the same time derives from a sense of measured separation from something, say a sense of dissociation. The hypocrite would dissociate himself or herself from a life of human vulnerabilities, call it human nature; the antihypocrite would dissociate himself or herself from a world of invulnerable pretenses. If adolescence will level the most unforgiving charge of hypocrisy at those ahead of it, it will level against itself an equally unforgiving charge of fraudulence—and the one because of the other. The world posed before it, beckoning it, is a field of possibilities, toward which curiosity is bound to out-

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reach commitment. It is inherently a time of theater, of self-consciousness presented as embarrassment, of separation from the familiar, of separation from the self, as if something were tearing; of a scrutiny that claims to know everything directing itself upon feelings and actions that can claim to know nothing. It is a time containing the reversal of rites of passage: the tribe shifts the responsibility for its pain from its back onto yours; and instead of opening secrets to you, it informs you that it has none, that what you see is all there is to it. Hence to its recruits it is now reduced merely to *saying* "Grow up."

I have several reasons for wanting to be in touch with you now. First, my old friend Judith Shklar is saying publicly that you finally lost the woman you love. This implies at the least that Célimène is right to refuse your offer of marriage with its condition that she abandon the remainder of the world, that she find the whole world in you. So I have to tell you that I agree with this verdict and will say so publicly. I will, however, go on to claim that the more significant fact, the mystery of your misanthropy, is that Célimène loves you, that they all love you, Arsinoé as well as Philinte; that they do not give you up but end their play by going to seek you out. Quite as if they think you are right, even if placed in the wrong, and cannot want to live without the thing you mean to them. And yet what? They find you too difficult or too hard. Is that your problem or theirs?

Second, the side of me that sides with you has in recent years repeatedly found itself siding with those for whom the relation of innocence and experience is their life, call it the relation between their past of possibilities and the present actuality of the world, or between their memories of being disappointed and their fears of being disappointing. Thoreau is talking about this relation in this passage from the chapter "Spring" in *Walden*. "While such a sun holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return. Through our own recovered innocence we discern the innocence of our neighbors. You may have known your neighbor yesterday for a thief, a drunkard, or a sensualist, and merely pitied or despised him, and despaired of the world; but the sun shines bright and warm this first spring morning, re-creating the world. . . . There is not only an atmosphere of good will about him, but even a savor of holiness groping for expression." Emerson, I now believe to his credit, can barely let the issue alone, the issue of consenting to the world. It is this fact of his perpetual youth, calling to the perpetual youth in us, more than his incessant sagacity about it, that keeps Emerson so annoying to good society. For example, in the Swedenborg chapter of *Representative Men:* "The human mind stands ever in perplexity, demanding intellect, demanding sanctity, impatient equally of each without the other. The reconciler has not yet appeared." We may have imagined that it is hard to be known for a sinner, and may have feared scandal from *that* quarter. It proves harder to be known for a saint, hard to forgive the one who knows it of us. This, I feel sure, is something Nietzsche loved Emerson for. Zarathustra says to the young man from whom he has elicited the confession that he has been destroyed by his envy of Zarathustra: "Yes, I know your peril. But, by my love and hope I entreat you: do not reject your love and hope! You still feel yourself noble, and the others, too, who dislike you and cast evil glances at you, still feel you are noble. Learn that everyone finds the noble man an obstruction. . . . Alas, I

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have known noble men who lost their highest hope. And henceforth they slandered all high hopes. . . . But, by my love and hope I entreat you: do not reject the hero in your soul! Keep holy your highest hope."

One day soon I mean to write to you about Dušan Makavejev's last film, which he calls *Sweet Movie*. It is, among other things, the most original exploration known to me of the endless relations between documentary and fictional film, incorporating both; hence an original exploration of the endless relations between reality and fantasy. The conscience of the film is most hideously captured in the Nazi film footage of German troops exhuming bodies from mass graves in the Katyn Forest. A lifelong participant in a society of socialist aspirations, Makavejev is asking: Was my revolution capable even of this? Has it cannibalized everything that has touched it? Is it true that the Red Army committed a mass murder of the Polish officer corps in order to replenish it with more favorable personnel? The film shows a card which contains Anthony Eden's response: "Let us think of these things always. Let us speak of them never." For Makavejev, that conspiracy of silence—call it mass hypocrisy—is a prescription for self-administered poison. Mere film cannot alone prove who caused and buried the corpses in the Katyn Forest, but this film can directly and by itself break the conspiracy of silence about it. *Sweet Movie* is a work that attempts to extract hope from the very fact that we are capable of genuine disgust at the world; that this disgust is to be understood as our revoltedness, as our chance of cleansing revulsion, that the fight for freedom continues to originate in the demands of our instincts. It is a work powerful enough to encourage us to think again that the tyrant's power continues to require our complicitous tyranny over ourselves. I would expect you, dear Alceste, to be capable of tears when, at the end of Makavejev's film, he allows a young boy who is fictionally dead, wrapped in plastic sheets and laid on a river bank, to resurrect and to declare himself as the young actor playing this part, thus exhuming his younger self, his innocent sincerity. He then directs this figure to look out from the screen and hence to confront his older self, his artistry, his experience as a filmmaker, a consenting adult in a world of horrors (thus, as Rousseau and Thoreau perceive, a conspirator of that world, chained by partialities) confronting himself with the chance to forgive himself, hence with the chance to start again.

You see that I would try to tempt you back, to tell you that there are those in the world who have not forgotten what you know, hence who feel the rebuke in your taking offense. But it is up to you and to us in our separate ways; it is pointless to beg, and this is not the time to harangue. The final reason I write now is to provide a cover for showing you something I have been thinking about *Othello*.[1]

My thoughts about it conclude a very long manuscript having to do principally with a topic close to your heart, namely whether, and on what basis, we must acknowledge the existence of other human beings. These thoughts picture Othello as, in various ways, a semblable of yours, one who demands being the whole world to the woman he loves, as some sort of price for his joining her in wedlock. My tale is cautionary. To you it warns that a mind and a character as pure and grand as Othello's may, in its isolation, fall to wallowing in littleness. Of the world my tale asks watchfulness over itself, over its ability to encourage

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and to protect the innocent. Say Othello's ugliness was to have gone the limit in murdering his love and his hope, the hero in his soul. But his beauty was to have had such a love and such high hopes. Like Lear, he confuses the private and the public, the erotic and the political, distorting both. But who finds himself in a position to correct them? Who is prepared to advise them to grow up? Halting the brawl on Cyprus, Othello asks how it happened, concluding: "What? In a town of war / Yet wild, the people's hearts brimful of fear, / To manage private and domestic quarrel? / In night, and on the court and guard of safety? / 'Tis monstrous. Iago, who began't?" (II, iii, 212-216) When these questions turn upon him, he will turn upon himself.

My thoughts also relate *Othello* to some passages from Montaigne, someone I have several times wanted to bring you together with. Montaigne is appalled by the human capacity for horror at the human. I think I know what he means and I think you do too. But the world during my lifetime rather shows that it is yet more horrible to lose this capacity for horror. Judith Shklar's essay is guided and colored by experiences of the world war of the forties and the local wars of the sixties. How could it not be? But aren't Nazis those who have lost the capacity for being horrified by what they do? They are our special monsters for *that* reason, monsters of adaptability. (Who knows whether what they did, apart from scale, was really that different from what others have done? Who knows whether the only real Nazis were created by a particular time and place and by a particular set of leaders and led? Who does not know that Nazism cannot succeed apart from the human capacity for *going along?* And what political thinker does not recognize that most of us will mostly go along with the tide of events, and even argue that we [mostly] ought to? But who does not see that there must be *some* limit to this? I am saying that Nazism specifically turns this human capacity for adapting into a mockery of itself, a mockery of being human.) And was hypocrisy really the charge that the students brought against America the other day? Their claim was to be in revolt because revolted, because horrified, by what they were asked to consent to. I do not raise the question whether their response was pure. My question here is whether one is prepared to credit revulsion and horror as conceivably political responses, as perhaps the only epistemological access to the state of the world; as possible forms of conscience. Or is every attempt to deny the political, deny it supremacy, as it has become, in human life, as it has become, to be dismissed as (anti-) hypocritical?

If youth cannot over a period of time make itself clear to age, this is tragic for both. I once described this situation as one in which society cannot hear its own screams. The nation was living then in the dissociated state of a foreign and incomprehensible war and I was, at the time I speak of, trying, defiantly if unsuccessfully, to conclude a private essay about *King Lear*, another dissociated world. (This is a play in which each of two fathers produces the image of parents cannibalizing their children. *Sweet Movie* is gorged with images of this fate.) Evidently I was going around in those days, as one did, subject to fits of hearing screams in my ears. Others sometimes may have thought me mad; I sometimes thought they were driving me mad. I did not, I believe, think they were hypocrites, though it is perfectly true that I thought something was wrong with them (even ones I loved, even ones I had tremendous hopes for, like Lyndon Johnson), and true that I did not want to hear their arguments again. What al-

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lowed me to continue writing my essay was the idea of including in it a love letter to America, though its anguish at the tragedy of America might have struck some to whom it was addressed as written out of hatred.

Montaigne seems, if I understand you both, to share your view of the exclusiveness of friendship, hence to be another of the most private of men; and yet somehow he puts this together with sociability. He invented, in inventing the essay, an intimate discourse for addressing strangers. He calls those whom he addresses his "relatives and friends," and so they are, after his discourse has made them so (which it does in part by showing its strangeness to them, hence their strangeness to him, so that they may understand that there is something yet for them to become familiar with). Isn't this a staggering thing when we remember our fathers? We may have known them not to have had the education they provided for us, and sometimes felt their heartiness as well as their melancholy to be bullying, to run roughshod over our subtleties. But I remember instances of my father in conversation with strangers—in a shop, a lobby, a train—animated, laughing, comparing notes, when the charge of insincerity fell from my grasp and I would gaze at his behavior as at a mystery. How can he care enough what the other thinks to be provident of his good feeling, and yet not care so terribly as to become unable to provide it? What skill enables him to be the one that puts the other at ease, and where did he acquire it? He knew no more about the other than the other knew about him. He seemed merely able to act on what nobody could fail to know, and to provide what nobody could fail to appreciate, even if in a given moment they could not return it. Call it sociability. At such a time I felt it would be happy to have my father as an acquaintance, to be treated by him to a serious regard, if somewhat external, for my comfort and opinion; to count not as an intimate but as an equal. The very need of formality, of ceremony, would all at once seem to me freeing, and for a while I glimpsed a splendor, a tenderness, in the idea of the sociable.

If you want further communication after the *Othello* material, it is not as hard as some of my acquaintances make out to find out where I am.[2]

* * *

The last part of the book[3] of which my reading of *Othello* takes the last pages is in effect a meditation on the relation between the title concepts of the two concluding essays of my book *Must We Mean What We Say?*—"Knowing and Acknowledging" and "The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*"—that is, a meditation on the reciprocity between acknowledgment and avoidance, hence between skepticism and tragedy. In particular, the reading of *Othello* is the most detailed of several moments I choose in Shakespeare from which to study the imagination of the body's fate in the progress of skepticism.

To orient ourselves, let us begin by considering briefly how it is that we are to understand, at the height of *The Winter's Tale*, Hermione's reappearance as a statue. Specifically I ask how it is that we are to understand Leontes's acceptance of the "magic" that returns her to flesh and blood, and hence to him. This is a most specific form of resurrection. Accepting it means accepting the idea that she had been turned to stone; that that was the right means for her disappearance from life. So I am asking for the source of Leontes's conviction in

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the rightness of that fate. Giving the question that form, the form of my answer is by now predictable: for her to return to him is for him to acknowledge her; and for him to acknowledge her is for him to acknowledge his relation to her; in particular to acknowledge what his denial of her has done to her, hence to him. So Leontes recognizes the fate of stone to be the consequence of his particular skepticism. One can see this as the projection of his own sense of numbness, of living death. But then why was this *his* fate? It is a most specific form of remorse or of (self-) punishment.

Its environment is provided by a tale of harrowing by jealousy, and a consequent accusation of adultery—an accusation known by everyone else to be insanely false. Hence Leontes is inevitably paired with Othello. I call attention to two further ways in which *The Winter's Tale* is a commentary on *Othello*, and therefore contrariwise. First, both plays involve a harrowing of the power of knowing the existence of another (as chaste, intact, as what the knower knows his other to be). Leontes refuses to believe a true oracle; Othello insists on believing a false one. Second, in both plays the consequence for the man's refusal of knowledge of his other is an imagination of stone. It is not merely an appetite for beauty that produces Othello's most famous image of his victim as a piece of cold and carved marble (". . . whiter skin of hers than snow, / And smooth, as monumental alabaster"). Where does his image come from?

Before I can give my answer I still need one further piece of orientation in thinking of tragedy as a kind of epistemological problem, or as the outcome of the problem of knowledge—of the dominance of modern philosophical thought by the problem of knowledge. Earlier, in meditating on the existence of other minds, I was led to ask how we are to understand the other as having displaced or absorbed the weight of God, the task of showing me that I am not alone in the universe. I was claiming there to be giving a certain derivation for the problem of the other. But I was also echoing one formulation Descartes gives his motive in wanting to find what is beyond doubt, namely, to know beyond doubt that he is not alone in the world (Third Meditation). Now I ask, in passing but explicitly, why it is Descartes does not try to defeat that possibility of isolation in what would seem the directest and surest way, by locating the existence of one other finite being.

He says simply that he can easily imagine that ideas "which represent men similar to myself" could be "formed by the combination of my other ideas, of myself, of corporeal objects, and of God, even though outside of me there were no other men in the world. . . ." He is, of course, setting up a powerful move toward God. And we can gather from this—something that seems borne out in the sequel of this piece of writing—that the problem of others (other finite beings) is not discovered, or derived, by Descartes to be a special problem of knowledge; this is surely one reason it would not have been discovered to be such in subsequent epistemology. However, the more one meditates on the unique place Descartes makes for his relation to his own body, the less clear and distinct it is that he has available to himself the formulation of the idea of another body as having a unique relation to its mind, in that special quasi-substantial way that he asserts is not like the way a ship is related to its pilot. But without such an idea, what is the content of the idea of "men similar to myself"? I do not

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conceive of Descartes's appealing to the route of analogy here, since he must be far surer that other human bodies go with minds than any sureness he can extract by inferring from another body's behavior alone. After all, the body has essentially nothing to do with the soul! In the light of this passing of the question of the other, a change is noticeable in the coda Descartes supplies his argument at the end of this third meditation:

> The whole force of the argument I have here used to prove the existence of God consists in the fact that I recognize that it would not be possible for my nature to be what it is, possessing the idea of a God, unless God really existed—the same God, I say, the idea of whom I possess, the God who possesses all these high perfections . . . [who] cannot be a deceiver . . .

The main point of summary is that I could not have produced the idea I have of God, for it can have come from nothing less than God himself. But a new note of necessity is also struck, that without the presence of this idea in myself, and (hence) the presence of the fact of which it is the imprint, my own nature would necessarily not be what it is. So not only the fact, as it were, of my existence, but the integrity of it, depends on this idea. (And so these meditations are about the finding of self-knowledge after all; of the knowledge of a human self by a human self.)

That the integrity of my (human, finite) existence may depend on the fact and on the idea of another being's existence, and on the possibility of *proving* that existence—an existence conceived from my very dependence and incompleteness, hence conceived as perfect, and conceived as producing me "in some sense, in [its] own image"—these are thoughts that take me to a study of *Othello*.

Briefly, to begin with, we have the logic, the emotion, and the scene of skepticism epitomized. The logic: "My life upon her faith" (I, iii, 295) and ". . . when I love thee not / Chaos is come again" (III, iii, 91-92) set up the stake necessary to best cases; the sense I expressed by the imaginary major premise, "If I know anything, I know this." One standing issue about the rhythm of *Othello*'s plot is that the progress from the completeness of Othello's love to the perfection of his doubt is too precipitous for the fictional time of the play. But such precipitousness is just the rhythm of skepticism; all that is necessary is the stake. The emotion: Here I mean not exactly Othello's emotion toward Desdemona, call it jealousy; but rather the structure of his emotion as he is hauled back and forth across the keel of his love. Othello's enactment, or sufferance, of that torture is the most extraordinary representation known to me of the "astonishment" in skeptical doubt. In the First Meditation we read: "I realize so clearly that there are no conclusive indications by which waking life can be distinguished from sleep that I am quite astonished, and my bewilderment is such that it is almost able to convince me that I am sleeping." (It does not follow that one is *convinced* that one is awake.) When Othello loses consciousness ("Is 't possible? —Confess? —Handkerchief? —Oh, devil!" [IV, i, 43-44]), it is not from conviction in a piece of knowledge but in an effort to stave the knowledge off. The scene: Here I have in mind the pervasive air of the language and the action of this play as one in which Othello's mind continuously outstrips reality, dissolves it in trance or dream or in the beauty or ugliness of his incantatory

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imagination; in which he visualizes possibilities that reason, unaided, cannot rule out. Why is he beyond aid? Why are the ear and the eye in him disjoined? We know that by the time he formulates his condition this way:

> By the world,
> I think my wife be honest, and think she is not.
> I think that thou art just, and think thou art not.
> I'll have some proof . . .
>
> (III, iii, 383-386)

he is lost. Two dozen lines earlier he had demanded of Iago "the ocular proof," a demand which was no purer a threat than it was a command, as if he does indeed wish for this outcome, as if he has a use for Iago's suspicions, hence a use for Iago that reciprocates Iago's use of him. Nothing I claim about the play here will depend on an understanding of the relation between Iago and Othello, so I will simply assert what is suggested by what I have just said, that such a question as "Why does Othello believe Iago?" is badly formed. It is not conceivable that Othello believes Iago and *not* Desdemona. Iago, we might say, offers Othello an opportunity to believe something, something to oppose to something else he knows. What does he know? Why does it require opposition? What do we know?

We have known (say since G. Wilson Knight's "The Othello Music") that Othello's language, call it his imagination, is at once his and the play's glory, and his shame; the source of his power and of his impotence; or we should have known (since Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*) that Othello is the most romantic of Shakespeare's heroes, which may be a way of summarizing the same facts. And we ought to attend to the perception that Othello is the most Christian of the tragic heroes (expressed in Norman Rabkin's *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding*). Nor is there any longer any argument against our knowledge that Othello is black; and there can be no argument with the fact that he has just married, nor with the description, compared with the case of Shakespeare's other tragedies, that this one is not political but domestic.

We know more specifically, I take it, that Othello's blackness means something. But what specifically does it mean? Mean, I mean, to him—for otherwise it is not Othello's color that we are interested in but some generalized blackness, meaning perhaps "sooty" or "filthy," as elsewhere in the play. This difference may show in the way one takes Desdemona's early statement: "I saw Othello's visage in his mind" (I, iii, 253). I think it is commonly felt that she means she overlooked his blackness in favor of his inner brilliance; and perhaps further felt that this is a piece of deception, at least of herself. But what the line more naturally says is that she saw his visage as he sees it, that she understands his blackness as he understands it, as the expression (or in his word, his manifestation) of his mind—which is not overlooking it. Then how does he understand it?

As the color of a romantic hero. For he, as he was and is, manifested by his parts, his title, and his "perfect soul" (I, ii, 31), is the hero of the tales of romance he tells, some ones of which he wooed and won Desdemona with, others of which he will die upon. It is accordingly the color of one with enchanted powers and magical protection, but above all it is the color of one of purity, of a perfect soul. Desdemona, in entering his life, hence in entering his story of his

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life, enters as a fit companion for such a hero; his perfection is now opened toward hers. His absolute stake in his purity, and its confirmation in hers, is shown in what he feels he has lost in losing Desdemona's confirmation:

> . . . My name, that was as fresh
> As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black
> As mine own face . . .
>
> (III, iii, 386-388)

Diana's is a name for the visage Desdemona saw to be in Othello's mind. He loses its application to his own name, his charmed self, when he no longer sees his visage in Desdemona's mind but in Iago's, say in the world's capacity for rumor. To say he loses Desdemona's power to confirm his image of himself is to say that he loses his old power of imagination. And this is to say that he loses his grasp of his own nature; he no longer has the same voice in his history. So then the question becomes: How has he come to displace Desdemona's imagination with Iago's? However terrible the exchange, it must be less terrible than some other. Then we need to ask not so much how Iago gained his power as how Desdemona lost hers.

We know, one gathers, that Desdemona has lost her virginity, the protection of Diana, by the time she appears to us. And surely Othello knows this! But this change in her condition, while a big enough fact to hatch millennia of plots, is not what Othello accuses her of. (Though would that accusation have been much more unfair than the unfaithfulness he does accuse her of?) I emphasize that I am assuming that in Othello's mind the theme and condition of virginity carry their full weight within a romantic universe. Here is Northrop Frye, writing on the subject recently: "Deep within the stock convention of virgin-baiting is a vision of human integrity imprisoned in a world it is in but not of, often forced by weakness into all kinds of ruses and strategems, yet always managing to avoid the one fate which really is worse than death, the annihilation of one's identity. . . . What is symbolized as a virgin is actually a human conviction, however expressed, that there is something at the core of one's infinitely fragile being which is not only immortal but has discovered the secret of invulnerability that eludes the tragic hero" (*The Secular Scripture,* p. 86).

Now let us consolidate what we know in this sketch so far. We have to think in this play not merely about marriage but about the marriage of a romantic hero and of a Christian man, one whose imagination has to incorporate the idea of two becoming one in marriage and the idea that it is better to marry than to burn. It is a play, though it is thought of as domestic, in which not a marriage but an idea of marriage, or let us say an imagination of marriage, is worked out. "Why did I marry?" is the first question Othello asks himself, to express his first raid of suspicion (III, iii, 242). The question has never been from his mind. Iago's first question to him is "Are you fast married?" and Othello's first set speech ends with something less than an answer: "But that I love the gentle Desdemona, / I would not my unhoused free condition / Put into circumscription and confine / For the sea's worth." Love is at most a necessary, not a sufficient, condition for marrying. And for some minds, a certain idea of love may compromise as much as validate the idea of marriage. It may be better, but it is not perfect to marry, as Saint Paul implies.

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We have, further, to think in this play not merely generally of marriage but specifically of the wedding night. It is with this that the play opens. The central fact we know is that the whole beginning scene takes place while Othello and Desdemona are in their bridal bed. The simultaneity is marked: "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe . . ." (I, i, 88). And the scene is one of treachery, alarms, of shouts, of armed men running through a sleeping city. The conjunction of the bridal chamber with a scene of emergency is again insisted on by Othello's reappearance from his bedroom to stop a brawl with his single presence; a reappearance repeated the first night in Cyprus. As though an appearance from his place of sex and dreams is what gives him the power to stop an armed fight with a word and a gesture. Or is this more than we know? Perhaps the conjunction is to imply that their "hour of love" (I, iii, 299-300), or their two hours, have each time been interrupted. There is reason to believe that the marriage has not been consummated, anyway reason to believe that Othello does not know whether it has. What is Iago's "Are you fast married?" asking? Whether a public, legal ceremony has taken place or whether a private act; or whether the public and the private have ratified one another? Othello answers by speaking of his nobility and his love. But apart from anything else this seems to assume that Iago's "you" was singular, not plural. And what does Othello mean in Cyprus by these apparently public words:

> . . . Come, my dear love,
> The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue—
> The profit's yet to come 'tween me and you.
>
> (II, iii, 8-10)

What is the purchase and what the fruits or profit? Othello has just had proclaimed a general celebration at once of the perdition of the Turkish fleet and of his nuptials (II, ii). If the fruits and profit is the resumption of their privacy, then the purchase was the successful discharge of his public office and his entry into Cyprus. But this success was not his doing; it was provided by a tempest. Is the purchase their (public) marriage? Then the fruits and profit is their conjugal love. Then he is saying that this is yet to come. It seems to me possible that the purchase, or price, was her virginity, and the fruits or profit their pleasure. There could hardly be greater emphasis on their having had just one shortened night together, isolated from this second night by a tempest (always in these matters symbolic, perhaps here of a memory, perhaps of an anticipation). Or is it, quite simply, that this is something he wishes to *say* publicly, whatever the truth between them? (How we imagine Desdemona's reaction to this would then become all important.)

I do not think that we must, or that we can, choose among these possibilities in Othello's mind. Rather, I think Othello cannot choose among them. My guiding hypothesis about the structure of the play is that the thing *denied our sight* throughout the opening scene—the thing, the scene, that Iago takes Othello back to again and again, retouching it for Othello's enchafed imagination—is what we are shown in the final scene, the scene of murder. This becomes our ocular proof of Othello's understanding of his two nights of married love. (It has been felt from Thomas Rymer to G. B. Shaw that the play obeys the rhythm of

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farce, not of tragedy. One might say that in beginning with a sexual scene denied our sight, this play opens exactly as a normal comedy closes, as if it turned comedy inside out.) I will follow out this hypothesis here only to the extent of commenting on that final scene.

However one seeks to interpret the meaning of the great entering speech of the scene ("It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul. . . . Put out the light, and then put out the light" [V, ii, 1, 7]), I cannot take its mysteries, its privacies, its magniloquence, as separate from some massive denial to which these must be in service. Othello must mean that he is acting impersonally, but the words are those of a man in a trance, in a dream-state, fighting not to awaken; willing for anything but light. By "denial" here I do not initially mean something requiring psychoanalytical, or any other, theory. I mean merely to ask that we not, conventionally but insufferably, assume that we know this woman better than this man knows her—making Othello some kind of exotic, gorgeous, superstitious lunkhead; which is about what Iago thinks. However much Othello deserves each of these titles, however far he believes Iago's tidings, he cannot just believe them; somewhere he also *knows* them to be false. This is registered in the rapidity with which he is brought to the truth, with no further real evidence, with only a counter-story (about the handkerchief) that bursts over him, or from him, as the truth. Shall we say he recognizes the truth too late? The fact is, he recognizes it when he is ready to, as one alone can; in this case, when its burden is dead. I am not claiming that he is trying not to believe Iago, or wants not to believe what Iago has told him. (This might describe someone who, say, had a good opinion of Desdemona, not someone whose life is staked upon hers.) I am claiming, on the contrary, that we must understand Othello to be wanting to believe Iago, to be trying, against his knowledge, to believe him. Othello's eager insistence on Iago's honesty, his eager slaking of his thirst for knowledge with that poison, is not a sign of his stupidity in the presence of poison but of his devouring need of it. I do not quite say that he could not have accepted slander about Desdemona so quickly, to the quick, unless he already believed it; but rather that it is a thing he would rather believe than something yet more terrible to his mind; that the idea of Desdemona as an adulterous whore is more convenient to him than the idea of her as chaste. But what could be more terrible than Desdemona's faithlessness? Evidently her faithfulness. But how?

Note that in taking Othello's entering speech as part of a ritual of denial, in the context of taking the murder scene as a whole to be a dream-enactment of the invisible opening of the play, we have an answer implied to our original question about this play, concerning Othello's turning of Desdemona to stone. His image denies that he scarred her and shed her blood. It is a denial at once that he has taken her virginity and that she has died of him. The whole scene of murder is built on the concept of sexual intercourse or orgasm as a dying. There is a dangerously explicit quibble to this effect in the exchange,

> *Oth.* Thou art on thy death bed.
> *Des.* Aye, but not yet to die.
>
> (V, ii, 51-52)

The possible quibble only heightens the already heartbreaking poignance of the wish to die in her marriage bed after a long life.

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Though Desdemona no more understands Othello's accusation of her than, in his darkness to himself, he does, she obediently shares his sense that this is their final night and that it is to be some dreamlike recapitulation of their former two nights. This shows in her premonitions of death (the Willow Song, and the request that one of the wedding sheets be her shroud) and in her mysterious request to Emilia, ". . . tonight / Lay on my bed my wedding sheets" (IV, ii, 106-107), as if knowing, and faithful to, Othello's private dream of her, herself preparing the scene of her death as Othello, utilizing Iago's stage directions, imagines it must happen ("Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated." "Good, good. The justice of it pleases. Very good" [IV, i, 219-223]); as if knowing that only with these sheets on their bed can his dream of her be contested. The dream is of contamination. The fact the dream works upon is the act of deflowering. Othello is reasonably literal about this, as reasonable as a man in a trance can be:

> . . . When I have plucked the rose,
> I cannot give it vital growth again,
> It must needs wither. I'll smell it on the tree.
> Ah, balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
> Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.
> Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
> And love thee after. . . .
>
> (V, ii, 13-19)

(Necrophilia is an apt fate for a mind whose reason is suffocating in its sumptuous capacity for figuration, and which takes the dying into love literally to entail killing. "That death's unnatural that kills for loving" [V, ii, 42]; or that turns its object to live stone. It is apt as well that Desdemona sense death, or the figure of death, as the impending cause of death. And at the very end, facing himself, he will not recover from this. "I kissed thee ere I killed thee." And after too. And not just now when you died from me, but on our previous nights as well.)

The exhibition of wedding sheets in this romantic, superstitious, conventional environment, can only refer to the practice of proving purity by staining. I mention in passing that this provides a satisfactory weight for the importance Othello attaches to his charmed (or farcical) handkerchief, the fact that it is spotted, spotted with strawberries.

Well, were the sheets stained or not? Was she a virgin or not? The answers seem as ambiguous as to our earlier question whether they are fast married. Is the final, fatal reenactment of their wedding night a clear denial of what really happened, so that we can just read off, by negation, what really happened? Or is it a straight reenactment, without negation, and the flower was still on the tree, as far as he knew? In that case, who was reluctant to see it plucked, he or she? On such issues, farce and tragedy are separated by the thickness of a membrane.

We of course have no answer to such questions. But what matters is that Othello has no answer; or rather he can give none, for any answer to the question, granted that I am right in taking the question to be his, is intolerable. The torture of logic in his mind we might represent as follows: Either I shed her

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blood and scarred her or I did not. If I did not then she was not a virgin and this is a stain upon me. If I did then she is no longer a virgin and this is a stain upon me. Either way I am contaminated. (I do not say that the sides of this dilemma are of equal significance for Othello.)

But this much logic anyone but a lunkhead might have mastered apart from actually marrying. (He himself may say as much when he asks himself, too late, why he married.) Then what quickens this logic for him? Call whatever it is Iago. What is Iago?

He is everything, we know, Othello is not. Critical and witty, for example, where Othello is commanding and eloquent; retentive where the other is lavish; concealed where the other is open; cynical where the other is romantic; conventional where the other is original; imagines flesh where the other imagines spirit; the imaginer and manager of the human guise; the bottom end of the world. And so on. A Christian has to call him devil. The single fact between Othello and Iago I focus on here is that Othello fails twice at the end to kill Iago, knowing he cannot kill him. This all but all-powerful chieftain is stopped at this nobody. It is the point of his impotence, and the meaning of it. Iago is everything Othello must deny, and which, denied, is not killed but works on, like poison, like furies.

In speaking of the point and meaning of Othello's impotence, I do not think of Othello as having been in an everyday sense impotent with Desdemona. I think of him, rather, as having been surprised by her, at what he has elicited from her; at, so to speak, a success rather than a failure. It is the dimension of her that shows itself in that difficult and dirty banter between her and Iago as they await Othello on Cyprus. Rather than imagine himself to have elicited that, or solicited it, Othello would imagine it elicited by anyone and everyone else. Surprised, let me say, to find that she is flesh and blood. It was the one thing he could not imagine for himself. For if she is flesh and blood then, since they are one, so is he. But then although his potency of imagination can command the imagination of this child who is everything he is not, so that she sees his visage in his mind, she also sees that he is not identical with his mind, he is more than his imagination, black with desire, which she desires. Iago knows it, and Othello cannot bear what Iago knows, so he cannot outface the way in which he knows it, or knows anything. He cannot forgive her for existing, for being separate from him, outside, beyond command, commanding, her captain's captain.

It is an unstable frame of mind which compounds figurative with literal dying in love; and Othello unstably projects upon her, as he blames her:

> O perjured woman! Thou dost stone thy heart,
> And makest me call what I intend to do
> A murder, which I thought a sacrifice.
>
> (V, ii, 63-65)

As he is the one who gives out lies about her, so he is the one who will give her a stone heart for her stone body, as if in his words of stone which confound the figurative and the literal there is the confounding of the incantations of poetry and of magic. He makes of her the thing he feels (". . . my heart is turned to stone" [IV, i, 193]), but covers the ugliness of his thought with the beauty of his

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imagery—a debasement of himself and of his art of words. But what produces the idea of sacrifice? How did he manage the thought of her death as a sacrifice? To what was he to sacrifice her? To his image of himself and of her, to keep his image intact, uncontaminated; as if *this* were his protection from slander's image of him, say from a conventional view of his blackness. So he becomes conventional, sacrificing love to convention. But this was unstable; it could not be said. Yet better thought than the truth, which was that the central sacrifice of romance has already been made by them: her virginity, her intactness, her perfection, had been gladly foregone by her for him, for the sake of their union, for the seaming of it. It is the sacrifice he could not accept, for then he was not himself perfect. It must be displaced. The scar is the mark of finitude, of separateness; it must be borne whatever one's anatomical condition, or color. It is the sin or the sign of refusing imperfection that produces, or justifies, the visions and torments of devils that inhabit the region of this play.

If such a man as Othello is rendered impotent and murderous by aroused, or by having aroused, female sexuality; or let us say: if this man is horrified by human sexuality, in himself and in others; then no human being is free of this possibility. What I have wished to bring out is the nature of this possibility, or the possibility of this nature, the way human sexuality is the field in which the fantasy of finitude, of its acceptance and its repetitious overcoming, is worked out; the way human separateness is turned equally toward splendor and toward horror, mixing beauty and ugliness; turned toward before and after; toward flesh and blood. In "Knowing and Acknowledging" I take the skeptical wish as one of interpreting "a metaphysical finitude as an intellectual lack." Is this a denial of the human or an expression of it? For of course there are those for whom the denial of the human *is* the human. Call this the Christian view. It would be why Nietzsche undertook to identify the task of overcoming the human with the task of overcoming the denial of the human; which implies overcoming the human not through mortification but through joy, say ecstasy. If the former can be thought of as the denial of the body then the latter may be thought of as the affirmation of the body. Then those who are pushed, in attempting to counter a dualistic view of mind and body, to assert the identity of body and mind, are skipping or converting the problem. For suppose my identity with my body is something that exists only in my affirmation of my body. Then the question is: What would the body *become* under affirmation? And what would become of *me*?

I conclude with two thoughts, or perspectives, from which to survey one's space of conviction in the reading I have started of *Othello*, and from which perhaps to guide it further.

First, what you might call the philosophy or the moral of the play seems all but contained in the essay Montaigne entitles "On some verses of Virgil," in such a remark as: "What a monstrous animal to be a horror to himself, to be burdened by his pleasures, to regard himself as a misfortune!" The essay concerns the compatibility of sex with marriage, of sex with age; it remarks upon, and upon the relations among, jealousy, chastity, imagination, doubts about virginity; upon the strength of language and the honesty of language; and includes mention of a Turk and of certain instances of necrophilia. One just about runs through the topics of *Othello* if to this essay one adds the essay "Of the

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power of imagination," which contains a Moor and speaks of a king of Egypt who, finding himself impotent with his bride, threatened to kill her, thinking it was some sort of sorcery. The moral would be what might have been contained in Othello's ". . . one that lov'd not wisely, but too well," that all these topics should be food for thought and moderation, not for torture and murder; as fit for rue and laughter as for pity and terror; that they are not tragic unless one makes them so, takes them so; that we are tragic in what we take to be tragic; that one must take one's imperfections with a "gay and sociable wisdom" (as in Montaigne's "Of experience") not with a somber and isolating eloquence. It is advice to accept one's humanity, and one can almost see Iago as the slanderer of human nature (this would be his diabolism) braced with Othello as the enacter of the slander—the one thinking to escape human nature from below, the other from above. But to whom is the advice usable? And how do we understand why it cannot be taken by those in directest need of it? The urging of moderation is valuable only to the extent that it results from a knowledge of the human possibilities beyond its urging. Is Montaigne's attitude fully earned, itself without a tint of the wish for exemption from the human? Or is Shakespeare's topic of the sheets and the handkerchief understandable as a rebuke to Montaigne, for refusing a further nook of honesty? A bizarre question, I suppose; but meant only to indicate how one might, and why one should, test whether my emphasis on the stain is necessary to give sufficient weight to one's experience of the horror and the darkness of these words and actions, or whether it is imposed.

My second concluding thought is more purely speculative, and arises in response to my having spoken just now of "the refusal of imperfection" as producing "the visions and torments of devils that inhabit the region of this play." I do not wish to dispute the evidence marshalled by Bernard Spivack in his *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* showing Iago to be a descendent of the late morality figure of the Vice. I mean rather to help explain further the appearance of that figure in this particular play, and, I guess, to suggest its humanizing, or human splitting off (the sort of interpretation Spivack's book seems to deplore). It is against the tradition of the morality play that I now go on to call attention—I cannot think I am the first to say it out loud—to the hell and the demon staring out of the names of Othello and Desdemona. I mention this curiosity to prepare something meant as a nearly pure conjecture, wishing others to prove it one way or another, namely that underlying and shaping the events of this play are certain events of witch trials. Phrases such as "the ocular proof" and ". . . cords, or knives / Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams . . ." (III, iii, 388–389) seem to me to call for location in a setting of legal torture. And I confess to finding myself thinking of Desdemona's haunting characterization of a certain conception of her as "a moth of peace" when I read, from an 1834 study called *Folk-lore of the NE of Scotland*, "In some parts of Scotland moths are called 'witches' " (quoted in Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*). But what prompts my thought primarily is the crazed logic Othello's rage for proof and for "satisfaction" seems to require (like testing for a woman's witchcraft by seeing whether she will drown, declaring that if she does she was innocent but if she does not she is to be put to death for a witch): What happened on our wedding night is that I killed her; but she is not dead; therefore she is not human; therefore she must die. ("Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men" [V, ii, 6].) Again he claims

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not to be acting personally, but by authority; here he has delivered a sentence. I recall that the biblical justification for the trial of witches was familiarly from the punishments in Exodus: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Othello seems to be babbling the crazed logic as he falls into his explicit faint or trance: "First to be hanged, and then to confess. I tremble at it" (IV, i, 38-39), not knowing whether he is torturer or victim.

I introduced the idea of the trial for witchcraft as a conjecture, meaning immediately that it is not meant as a hypothesis: I do not *require* it for any interpretative alignment of my senses with the world of this play. It is enough, without supposing Shakespeare to have cribbed from literal subtexts of this sort, that the play opens with a public accusation of witchcraft, and an abbreviated trial, and is then succeeded with punctuating thoughts of hell and by fatal scenes of psychological torture, and concludes with death as the proof of mortality, that is, of innocence (cf., "If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee" [V, ii, 287]). Enough, I mean, to stir the same depths of superstition—of a horror that proposes our lack of certain access to other minds—that under opportune institutions caused trials of witchcraft. The play is at once, as we would expect of what we call Shakespeare's humanity, an examination of the madness and bewitchment of inquisitors, as well as of the tortures of love; of those tortures of which both victim and torturer are victims.

A statue, a stone, is something whose existence is fundamentally open to the ocular proof. A human being is not. The two bodies lying together on their bridal and death sheets form an emblem of this fact, the truth of skepticism. What this man lacked was not certainty. He knew everything, but he could not yield to what he knew, be commanded by it. He found out too much for his mind, not too little. Their differences from one another—the one everything the other is not—form an emblem of human separation, which can be accepted, and granted, or not. Like the dissociation from God; everything we are not.

References

[1]Quotations from *Othello* are taken from *Complete Works of William Shakespeare* by G. B. Harrison (Harcourt Brace, New York: 1952).

[2]I am grateful to Stephen Graubard and to Judith Shklar for comments that helped me to improve the letter to Alceste.

[3]From *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*, by Stanley Cavell. Copyright © 1979 by Oxford University Press, Inc. Quoted by permission of the publisher. An abbreviated version of this material was presented at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association in December 1978.

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BRIAN VICKERS

Shakespeare's Hypocrites

L'hypocrisie est un hommage que la vice rend à la vertu.[1]

I

La rochefoucauld's famous maxim challenges by the precision with which it is formulated. On further reflection, however, we may apply to it T. W. Baldwin's criticism of the genre as a whole: "A brilliant aphorism is a dangerous thing. It is always a lie and never the truth."[2] Questionable though that judgment may be on the aphorism in general, it does seem to me to catch the half-formed nature of this observation, or perhaps, better speaking, its lack of a frame. La Rochefoucauld gives us an observation on behavior, but withholds speculation on the causes for that behavior. If we consider why people become hypocrites—as far as I know, no one is ever born one—then we would have to suggest a variety of motives. Shame at what one has done, or is doing, may cause one to cover one's vice with the appearance of holiness: this, I suppose, is what is meant by giving homage, or paying tribute, to virtue. Hypocrisy of this kind derives from the agent's conscience telling him of his evil, while his desire not to appear evil causes him to feign goodness. His goal is no more than to conceal from others the discrepancy he feels between his own behavior and what he knows to be the standards of his group, or wider society, or religion. Hypocrisy of this kind is familiar to us all, from our own practice of it and from our knowledge of it in others, whether real people or fictional characters, such as the puritans in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*. This type of hypocrisy is often backward-looking, designed to retain or consolidate what one already owns—I think of Bulstrode in *Middlemarch*, before his encounter with Will Ladislaw.

Yet, in both life and literature—and especially in drama—such static hypocrisy, while condemned (if discovered or exposed), does not generate the energy or interest produced by a more dynamic dissimulation. Here the pretense of good is not merely a cover for the continuing practice of one's own faults, whether grave or trifling, but is the method by which a person breaks out new ones, tries to reach some clearly defined goal. It is a pretense or imposture adopted in order to achieve power, or riches, or sensual gratification, all types of the fulfillment of desire. Usually the imposture is adopted consciously, deliberately—a man *becomes* a hypocrite; but some, besides achieving hypocrisy, have it thrust upon them. At the beginning of *Measure for Measure*, Angelo, the deputy judge who rules over Vienna in the Duke's absence, is a man of severe habits, whose aus-

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terity suppresses desire in himself and would utterly eradicate it in others. As Lucio, part villain, part commentator, describes him, he is

> a man whose blood
> Is very snow-broth; one who never feels
> The wanton stings and motions of the sense; . . .
> (I, iv, 57 ff.)

Angelo's judgment on Claudio, a death sentence for having got his bride-to-be *with child, is severe, but is consistent with his principles, and he can affirm* without hypocrisy, although self-righteously,

> When I, that censure him, do so offend,
> Let mine own judgment pattern out my death,
> And nothing come in partial.
> (II, i, 29 ff.)

Yet the confrontation with Isabella, come to appeal on her brother's behalf, fills Angelo with desire for the first time in his life:

> *What's this? What's this? Is this her fault or mine?*
> The tempter or the tempted, who sins most, ha?
> Not she. Nor doth she tempt. But it is I
> That, lying by the violet in the sun,
> Do as the carrion does, not as the flow'r,
> Corrupt with virtuous season.
> (II, ii, 163 ff.)

Shakespeare there gives us Angelo's conscience, aware of his own fall, yet not at this time deriving any conclusion or consequence from it.

But when we see him next, his desire has begun to eat away his conscience, and he feels possessed by "the strong and swelling evil / Of my conception" (II, iv, 6 f.). In the great tempting scene between Angelo and Isabella, the deputy exclaims on other men's sins, "Ha! Fie, these filthy vices!" (II, iv, 42), but proceeds to proposition her with a debased contract, that she should exchange her chastity for her brother's life. Since he is in truth "now the voice of the recorded law" (61), he can afford to ignore Isabella's outburst against his "most pernicious purpose":

> Seeming, seeming!
> I will proclaim thee, Angelo; look for 't!
> (150 f.)

The new leader is the new hypocrite:

> Who will believe thee, Isabel?
> My unsoiled name, th' austereness of my life,
> My vouch against you, and my place i' th' state,
> Will so your accusation overweigh,
> That you shall stifle in your own report,
> And smell of calumny . . . .
> —As for you,
> Say what you can; my false o'erweighs your true.
> (154 ff.)

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From this point on, Shakespeare develops a complicated intrigue, involving a nocturnal assignation, where Isabella's place in bed is taken by Mariana, to whom Angelo had been engaged and whom he'd abandoned when her dowry was shipwrecked, and a parallel substitution of the head of "one Ragozine, a most notorious pirate" (IV, iii, 75) for Claudio's. The main agent in this complex plotting is the Duke, who has returned to Vienna disguised as a friar in order to observe Angelo, and who finds himself having to intercept and convert all of Angelo's evil orders in order to preserve justice.

So we arrive at the final scene, where the Duke now returns in his own person, to act as a tribunal for complaints against Angelo. That man, who imagines that he has enjoyed the sister, and killed the brother—thus breaking even the corrupt contract he had himself proposed—listens with composure to Isabella's accusation that he is "a murderer, . . . an adulterous thief, / An hypocrite, a virgin-violator" (V, i, 39 ff.). Isabella does not know that the Duke is one and same as the friar who had instructed her in the foiling of Angelo's plots, and so, lacking any independent evidence, she realizes how feeble her case must seem; yet she still affirms that

> the wicked'st caitiff on the ground,
> May seem as shy, as grave, as just, as absolute
> As Angelo. . . .
>
> (V, i, 53 ff.)

But the Duke, behaving as Angelo had predicted, and as he would have to behave if he had no evidence, sweeps aside her complaint, leaving her with only heaven to appeal to:

> Then, O you blessed ministers above,
> Keep me in patience, and with ripened time
> Unfold the evil, which is here wrapp'd up
> In countenance.
>
> (V, i, 115 ff.)

Isabella is carried off to prison, and Angelo disposes with equal aplomb of the claim by Mariana that he was first affianced with her, threw her off, but in fact consummated the marriage, "But Tuesday night last gone, in 's garden-house" (229), which, if true, would mean that, by English law in Shakespeare's time, Angelo would be compelled to marry her.

Angelo's hypocrisy has preserved itself for an amazingly long time; yet when the Duke finally exposes him, Angelo instantly admits his faults:

> O my dread lord!
> I should be guiltier than my guiltiness,
> To think I can be undiscernible,
> When I perceive your Grace, like pow'r divine,
> Hath look'd upon my passes.
>
> (366 ff.)

Angelo even begs his own death as punishment, twice (373 f., 475 f.), revealing an innate goodness which we had glimpsed a while before in his remorse after

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having, as he thinks, seduced Isabella and killed Claudio (IV, iv, 20 ff.). As Isabella says, pleading for his pardon,

> I partly think
> A due sincerity governed his deeds,
> Till he did look on me.
>
> (V, i, 445 ff.)

And since "his act did not o'ertake his bad intent," because he bedded Mariana, not Isabella, and since it is now revealed that Claudio was not executed, then Angelo is guilty of no crime. He can be made to marry his contracted wife, but otherwise his public humiliation is adequate punishment for his intended perversion of justice. But for those who have been taken in by this "outward-sainted deputy," they can only marvel, with the Duke:

> O, what may man within him hide,
> Though angel on the outward side!
> How may likeness made in crimes,
> Making practice on the times, . . .
>
> (III, ii, 271 ff.)

In Shakespeare's English, "practice" has the connotation of Machiavellian duplicity, and the Duke may legitimately excuse his own use of deception: "Craft against vice I must apply."

II

This brief recollection of *Measure for Measure* establishes some terms for a wider discussion of Shakespeare. Isabella's outburst against "seeming," deceptive appearances, is a constant in Shakespeare, as in *Much Ado,* in Claudio's revulsion—"Out on thee! Seeming! I will write against it" (IV, i, 57) or in Hamlet's *nota-bene:*

> My tables—meet it is I set it down
> That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain!
>
> (I, v, 107 ff.)

When good people in Shakespeare deceive others, it is usually to a harmless end (the wooing of Beatrice and Benedick), or a corrective one (the gulling of Malvolio). When it is more serious, they generally excuse or apologize for it in the name of some higher good. Edgar, pretending to have led his blind father to the top of Dover Cliff, explains the purpose of the pretense:

> *[Aside]* Why I do trifle thus with his despair
> Is done to cure it.
>
> (IV, vi, 33 f.)

Otherwise in Shakespeare, dissimulation, like hypocrisy, is an evil.

There are exceptions to that rule in comedy, and in the history plays. Richard III, who ends as a blood-boltered and loathed villain, enjoys for the first part of

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his career our mingled admiration at his exuberance and panache. The scene where he deceives the citizens of London into proclaiming him king is comic, with sardonic overtones about the easy corruption of democracy. Buckingham presents him as a paragon of virtue:

> Ah, ha, my lord, this Prince is not an Edward!
> He is not lolling on a lewd love-bed,
> But on his knees at meditation; . . .
>
> (*Richard III*, vii, 71 ff.)

and so on, a presentation of religious insincerity culminating in his delicious reply to Buckingham's 'Zounds: "O, do not swear, my Lord of Buckingham" (III, vii, 220). That and other scenes amuse us by their very outrage on truth. No one performs that outrage so frequently, or so engagingly, as Falstaff, when he defends his depraved existence with an effrontery that we would hardly wish to question, since we enjoy it so much:

> My lord, I was born about three of the clock in the afternoon, with a white head and something a round belly. For my voice, I have lost it with hallooing, and singing of anthems.
>
> (*2 Henry IV*, I, ii, 210 ff.)

Yet Falstaff ceases to amuse when he begins to corrupt the king's army, or when he stabs the dead body of Hotspur to claim it as his own prize. "Nothing confutes me but eyes, and nobody sees me" (*I Henry IV*, V, iv, 129 f.): but we, the audience, see him, and we confute him.[3]

What Montaigne said of a lie, that it shrinks from men but faces God,[4] can be adapted to drama: in addition, a lie also faces the audience. Where Isabella had appealed to the heavens to "unfold the evil, which is here wrapp'd up / In countenance," that function of exposing hypocrisy has in fact been performed by the writer in the very act of creating it. That is, while within the world of the play it is the Duke who, "like power divine," penetrates Angelo's deceptions, the whole play is the work of Shakespeare's "power," which has in common with divinity that it can pierce disguise. The exposure of hypocrisy, then, exists on two levels: one, in the very act of creation, by which the hypocrite is seen and known to the audience or reader. But on the second level, in most novels and plays there is a sequence of exposure within the literary work itself. It is never the case that a writer creates a hypocrite without giving us some clue, however subtle, to his dissimulation; and it is seldom the case that he is not exposed within the bounds of the artwork. This may sound like a special aesthetic law, but in fact I believe it is implicit in the very act of pronouncing, or thinking, the word "hypocrite": you only use it when you have caught one. So many of the literary works having *hypocrisy* in their title add to it the word *exposed*, or a synonym. Ten minutes with a good library catalogue will yield plentiful examples of *Hypocrisie unvail'd and Jesuitisme unmaskt* (1662: by Robert Boreman), or *Hypocrisis Marci Antonii de Dominis detecta* (1620: by John Floyd), or *Hypocrisie alamode, expos'd in a true picture of [Jeremy Collier]* (1704: by Thomas Brown), or *Hypocrisie unmasked*, the title of two works with American associa-

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tions, one published in 1646 by Edward Winslow relating grievances by *the Governor and company of Massachusetts against Samuel Gordon of Rhode Island*, the other published in 1776 with the subtitle *or, A short inquiry into the religious complaints of our American colonies.*[5] "Hypocrisy displayed," then, is a two-stage process, a masking followed by an unmasking.

The associations of "hypocrite" with "actor" are familiar, but they must not be used to muddy or blur the nature of drama itself. The metaphor of the world as a theater has been much discussed, but it has not always been observed that while theatrical imagery is, and always has been, predominantly derogatory, used to expose human pretense, or the futility of secular life compared to some other existence or system,[6] that does not in itself debase the theater. Shakespeare is using plays and actors to present insincerity or hypocrisy, but that does not make him or them corrupt. The medium is not the same as the message. Yet in several places Shakespeare does describe hypocrisy in theatrical terms. When, in the last play of the *Henry VI* trilogy, the future Richard III is presenting to the audience his capabilities—as if auditioning for that role—he exults that he can

> wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
> And frame my face to all occasions. . . .
> I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
> Deceive more slily than Ulysses could,
> And like a Sinon, take another Troy.
> I can add colours to the chameleon,
> Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
> And set the murderous Machiavel to school.
>
> (*3 Henry VI*, III, ii, 184 ff.)

When Buckingham presents his credentials for deceiving the London citizens it is in similar theatrical-Machiavellian terms:

> Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
> Speak and look back, and pry on every side,
> . . . ghastly looks
> Are at my service, like enforced smiles;
> And both are ready in their offices
> At any time, to grace my stratagems.
>
> (*Richard III*, III, v, 5 ff.)

The most intense, sustained, and bitter developments of this connection between hypocrisy and acting occur in *Coriolanus*. In the great political battle of this play, the election campaign that fills most of acts II and III, the patrician party attempts to have Coriolanus elected consul in return for his many services to Rome in the wars. His election is opposed by the Tribunes Brutus and Sicinius, the newly elected representatives of the populace, who see that his election, as a confirmed enemy of the people, will destroy their power and office (II, i, 218 ff.). The election ceremony consists of the candidate having to go among the people in the marketplace, wearing a specially humble dress, "the napless vesture of humility," and, stripping his war wounds to testify his services, effectively solicit the people's "voices" for him. To the young Coriolanus, who has been brought up with that hatred of the plebeians common to all his

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class, the ceremony is abhorrent, and he performs it in a vein of sarcastic humility, which the people, stupid though they are shown to be, notice, but can do nothing about. When they report back to their leaders, though, Shakespeare creates a remarkable shock effect by disclosing that the Tribunes had in effect already coached and rehearsed the people in their role. What was meant to be a free democratic choice is revealed to have been a rigged election that went wrong. Brutus rebukes them:

> Could you not have told him—
> As you were lessoned—when he had no power,
> But was a petty servant to the state,
> He was your enemy . . . .
> You should have said . . . ,

and so on (II, iii, 175 ff.). The Tribunes' strategy was based not on any reasoned political criticism of Coriolanus's position, but on the intention to manipulate him psychologically. Since he is known to be short-tempered you have only to insult him to provoke his anger, at which point you can drive him from the stage (II, i, 221-256). For their "good," this will be his "destruction," Sicinius had said, and now he recapitulates the strategy of provocation:

> Thus to have said,
> As you were fore-advised, had touched his spirit
> And tried his inclination . . . . galled his surly nature
> . . . so, putting him to rage,
> You should have ta'en the advantage of his choler,
> And passed him unelected.
>
> (II, iii, 189 ff.)

This perversion of politics is bad enough; worse still is their urging the people to blame their Tribunes for having persuaded them to vote for Coriolanus:

> *Brutus.* Lay
> A fault on us, your tribunes, that we laboured,
> No impediment between, but that you must
> Cast your election on him.
> *Sicinius.* Say you chose him
> More after our commandment. . . . Lay the fault on us.
> *Brutus.* Ay, spare us not. Say we read lectures to you,
> How youngly he began to serve his country,
> How long continued. . . .
>
> (II, iii, 225 ff.)

This is so far from the truth that we are appalled at their hypocrisy, revealed "in private," as it were, which would make a mockery of democracy. They reveal themselves within the privacy of their own political group—but we see them.

Yet the special nature of *Coriolanus* is to balance party against party, expressing what Coleridge called "the wonderful philosophic impartiality in Shakespeare's politics"[7]—provided that we do not expect impartiality to include showing admirable ethical behavior somewhere on this political scene. When the Tribunes have organized a first provocation of Coriolanus, resulting in the senate debate ending in chaos and the threat of civil war (III, i), he returns to his

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house, puzzled at the events, and the fact that his mother does not support his open intransigence. When he had been told the first time to go beg the people's votes, he had objected: "It is a part / That I shall blush in acting" (II, ii, 142 f.). Now he confronts Volumnia with the same equation of political role-playing with corruption:

> Why did you wish me milder? Would you have me
> False to my nature? Rather say I play
> The man I am.
>
> (III, ii, 14 ff.)

As the immediately preceding lines make clear, Volumnia has indoctrinated Coriolanus with her hatred of the people; yet, in order to maintain his "power" (17) she shows that she can temporize:

> I have a heart as little apt as yours,
> But yet a brain that leads my use of anger
> To better vantage.
>
> (29 ff.)

The use of anger for advantage is exactly the method of the Tribunes: the awful effect of this scene is to make us realize that the patricians' methods are just as corrupt as their opponents'. One of the most detested words in Renaissance English was "policy," which had acquired, through the outraged propaganda against Machiavelli during the sixteenth century, all the negative senses of unscrupulous manipulation, dissimulation, and treachery, the achieving of one's political aims by any means.[8] Volumnia now actually urges that "honour and policy," since they go together in war, should do so in peace, too. (To preserve the state, all's fair in peace or war—we have heard that argument since.) For "your best ends," then—again unknowingly echoing the Tribunes ("as our good wills")—Volumnia urges him to go and profess a love to the people which he does not feel.

By her introductory defense of "policy," Shakespeare has made it clear what sort of advice she will give. He reinforces our sense of Volumnia's corruption by the very language she uses, as she tells her son to speak to the people not from his intelligence,

> Nor by th' matter which your heart prompts you,
> But with such words that are but roted in
> Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables
> Of no allowance to your bosom's truth. . . .
>
> (III, ii, 52 ff.)

To another person, to speak "bastard" words which your heart ought to disown might seem to corrupt yourself, but in the interest of the state, Volumnia proclaims, "I would dissemble with my nature" (62). From that willingness to deny one's own integrity Volumnia proceeds to instruct Coriolanus in the acting required of the politician:

> I prithee now, my son,
> Go to them with this bonnet in thy hand;
> And thus far having stretched it, here be with them,

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> Thy knee bussing the stones *[curtseys]*—for in such business
> Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th' ignorant
> More learnéd than the ears.
>
> (III, ii, 72 ff.)

Her condescension, both to him and to them, is insulting, but far more insulting is the injunction to go, "asking their good loves" (84), when you really despise them.

Coriolanus, silent for a long time, reaches a moment of decision:

> Must I go show them my unbarbéd sconce?
> With my base tongue give to my noble heart
> A lie that it must bear? Well, I will do 't: . . .
> To th' market place!
> You have put me now to such a part which never
> I shall discharge to th' life.
>
> (III, ii, 99 ff.)

Another patrician says "we'll prompt you," and Volumnia describes it, amorally, as "a part" he has "not done before." But as the theatrical implications sink in, Coriolanus's disgust at the hypocrisy he is asked to perform wells up:

> Well, I must do 't.
> Away, my disposition, and possess me
> Some harlot's spirit! . . .
> The smiles of knaves
> Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up
> The glasses of my sight! A beggar's tongue
> Make motion through my lips. . . .
>
> (III, ii, 110 ff.)

These are all the tricks of the Machiavellian hypocrite as described by Richard III and Buckingham. It is no wonder that, as he itemizes them and realizes what it will do to his integrity if he obeys his mother, Coriolanus should finally burst out:

> I will not do 't;
> Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth,
> And by my body's action teach my mind
> A most inherent baseness.
>
> (III, ii, 120 ff.)

Yet Volumnia has him so much under her thumb that she has only to threaten to withdraw her love from him (123-128) for him to capitulate:

> Mother, I am going to the market-place;
> Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves,
> Cog their hearts from them, . . .
>
> (III, ii, 131 ff.)

Such words as "mountebank" (the most deceitful salesman in the marketplace) and "cog" (to wheedle; with the associations of cheating) have only negative associations in Shakespeare: Coriolanus has indeed become debased by his mother's espousal of political hypocrisy.

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In the event the "part," an adopted, barely memorized role, proves to be far too slight to counteract the real dislike he feels for the people and for the election process. In the scene immediately following, we see the Tribunes rehearsing the people yet again, reminding them of the accusations to be made (III, iii, 1 ff.), and even coaching them in their shouts:

> And when they hear me say "It shall be so
> I' th' right and strength o' th' commons," be it either
> For death, for fine, or banishment, then let them,
> If I say "Fine," cry "Fine!" if "Death," cry "Death!" . . .
> (III, iii, 12 ff.)

The Tribunes, with the people, outnumber and outwit the patricians, easily provoking Coriolanus to the anger that leads to his banishment and the consolidation of their own power. Having achieved their goal, Shakespeare reveals them donning the mask of humility again, a bitter "Before / After" effect:

> Now we have shown our power,
> Let us seem humbler after it is done
> Than when it was a-doing.
> (IV, ii, 3 ff.)

When attacked by Volumnia their hypocrisy even claims that Coriolanus "unknit himself / The noble knot he made," a point made only for her to reject it: " 'Twas you incensed the rabble" (31 ff.). In a later scene, the last moment of peace before Coriolanus returns with the Volscian army to take his revenge on Rome, the Tribunes receive the citizens' gratitude with a hypocrisy as stunning as that of Richard III:

> *Brutus.* Farewell, kind neighbours. We wish'd Coriolanus
> Had lov'd you as we did. . . .
> *Sicinius.* This is a happier and more comely time
> Than when those fellows ran about the streets
> Crying confusion.
> (IV, vi, 23 ff.)

—as if they had not engineered the whole chaos for their own advantage! It is all too fitting that, as Coriolanus approaches Rome, the people in their panic should turn against the Tribunes, who cringe, disclaim responsibility (IV, vi, 121 ff.), and even beg Menenius to intercede (V, i, 33 ff.). Corrupt, cowardly, and shameless, and threatened by their own followers with death (V, iv, 35 ff.), the success of Volumnia in persuading Coriolanus to abandon his revenge allows them to go free. At the end of the play all the hypocrites, all the manipulators of public life, patrician or plebeian, remain alive. The only person to die is the man who challenged that system and its values. He exposed the hypocrisy in his own party, but for the rest it was the audience alone who were allowed to see the whole range of political dissimulation.

The case of *Coriolanus* is instructive, for in it Shakespeare exposed, with a Brecht-like clarity (perhaps the feature that attracted Brecht to make his adaptation of it, from the people's viewpoint), the process of corruption which always forms the basis—whether revealed or not—of hypocrisy. It is a special case, for

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Shakespeare built up the whole personal and political struggle in that play, deviating in many instances from his sources, so that everything should pivot around the ceremony in which this young man fails to profess a love he does not feel. Coriolanus's integrity is superior to the values of either Volumnia or the Tribunes, but there is no doubt which approach is calculated to succeed in politics. The two routes by which one could obtain power, Machiavelli taught, were force or fraud.[9] The doublet is used by Shakespeare,[10] and both his histories and tragedies show the workings, and successes, of this double way. Force can only be used openly in a legitimate context, such as war against another state, or if one's own party has enough power to launch a rebellion. Fraud, though, is a resource open to any person or group in any circumstances. To succeed it needs only two factors—dissimulation and trust: the power to feign, by the deceiver, and his victim's willingness to trust him. The three tragedies in which fraud and hypocrisy play their biggest roles are *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*.[11]

III

In *Macbeth* we have many of the elements of *Measure for Measure*—desire, corruption attended by conscience, hypocrisy—yet pitched at a far higher level of intensity and significance, and lacking the benevolent presence of the Duke to pierce deception and annul its effects (a quasi-magical role which Shakespeare only used once again, and much more successfully, for Prospero in *The Tempest*). Instead of the Duke we have his opposites, the witches, and Lady Macbeth, one supernatural and one human force, both able to penetrate Macbeth's desires and lead or drive him on to the fulfillment of them, whatever his misgivings. The fact that a desire for the crown exists in Macbeth prior even to the witches' prophecy that he will become king is shown in his reaction to that prophecy:

> *Banquo.* Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear
> Things that do sound so fair?
>
> (I, iii, 51 f.)

Macbeth is "rapt," outside himself, with the prophecy, and the immediate appearance of Duncan's messengers with the news that he has been created Thane of Cawdor—news which, as Banquo says in ironic ignorance, "might yet enkindle you unto the crown"—generates Macbeth's vision of his future success:

> *[Aside]* Two truths are told,
> As happy prologues to the swelling act
> Of the imperial theme.
>
> (I, iii, 51 f.)

The word "swelling" is sometimes glossed by comparison with a stage thronged with people, but it also suggests pregnancy, and we may recall Angelo's sense of "the strong and swelling evil / Of my conception."

At this point, Macbeth is given a number of asides, a dramatic technique that Shakespeare used consistently in his presentation of hypocrisy. An aside is a piece of direct address to the audience: it takes place simultaneously with the

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dramatic action, is produced by, and directed toward, that action, yet stands a little outside it. We might conceive of the aside as occupying a zone midway between the play and the audience; we continue to experience the play, but we do so via the new information or attitudes given us by the character or characters speaking the asides. If used frequently, or if used in conjuction with the soliloquy, this mode of direct presentation causes us to see the action partly through the eyes of that character. The result is to bring us into closer contact with that person, so that we in part share his or her hopes and fears, become more closely involved with their desire to control their world. (It seems to me an odd misuse of modern theater aesthetics for some of our contemporaries to believe that asides and soliloquies are "distancing" or "alienating" devices: rather the opposite.) We share every stage of Richard III's progress, with his ten soliloquies effectively dominating our experience of the play, at any rate in the first three acts.

A significant point about Shakespeare's use of asides and soliloquies in the tragedies that include hypocrisy as an important element of the dramatic design, concerns the allocation of these passages of direct address. In the comedies that expose hypocrisy (Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, Parolles in *All's Well that Ends Well*), we typically see the hypocrite through the eyes of the group of people exposing him—Sir Toby, Maria, and company; the soldiers helping Bertram to see his favorite's falseness. They are the moral perspective that defines, and reveals, pretense. In the tragedies, though, Shakespeare gives the direct address to the hypocrites, not to their exposers. We see the social group from the viewpoint of the people out to exploit and deceive it. We are made to share their view, and with it their plans and hopes to gain at the expense of good. In the case of Richard III, indeed, it could be argued that Shakespeare threw himself into the creation of this perspective with too much zest: we tend to become seduced by Richard's wit, energy, glamor, and endlessly creative powers of dissimulation, to the point where we enjoy his successes, not realizing their evil meaning—until the murder of the Princes brings us up short, and changes the play into a more orthodox crime-and-punishment plot.

Macbeth is infinitely more complex, of course, but it does create, through the use of direct address, a similarly intimate relation between the audience and the hypocrite. There are few dramatic characters whom we feel we know so totally as Macbeth: know how they think, feel, judge. With the uncomplicated, evil-meaning villains, such as Richard, or Iago, or Edmund, Shakespeare runs the risk of turning us into their accomplices out of a too-close involvement, or admiration at their skills; with Macbeth, the divided claims of desire and conscience ("This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill; cannot be good") keep us constantly aware of the evil against which he struggles. Our closeness to him becomes a closeness in which we, too, wrestle with a moral dilemma. Yet, together with the involvement, we have his own moral sense that gives us a detached, judging position. So we share his horror as he observes in himself, experiences almost passively—as if it were happening to someone else—the emergence of the desire to murder Duncan:

> If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature? Present fears

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> Are less than horrible imaginings:
> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man that function
> Is smothered in surmise, and nothing is
> But what is not.
>
> (134 ff.)

There, with amazing speed, we become privy to the secret that sets him apart from the others on stage, the goal to which all his energies will ultimately strive.

Knowledge of Macbeth's intentions gives the audience superior insight during all that follows, and enables us to gauge the false appearances that he assumes. One of the least often discussed aspects of Shakespeare's mastery of language is his ability to present insincerity: whenever anyone in his plays is being insincere, we know it. So Macbeth thanks Duncan's messengers:

> Kind gentlemen, your pains
> Are registers where every day I turn
> The leaf to read them.
>
> (150 ff.)

In similarly insincere terms he thanks Duncan for the honors he has received from him:

> The service and the loyalty I owe,
> In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part
> Is to receive our duties: and our duties
> Are to your throne and state, children and servants;
> Which do but what they should, by doing everything
> Safe toward your love and honour.
>
> (I, iv, 22 ff.)

These speeches are subtly calculated by Shakespeare, for their insincerity is obvious to us (the affected metaphors, the flabby repetitions), while not to the recipients to whom they are intended. Shakespeare is using language on two levels for Macbeth, one of which rebukes the other. Once Duncan has created his eldest son Prince of Cumberland, and named him his successor, we see the real language of Macbeth, the level of desire:

> *[Aside]* The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step
> On which I must fall down, or else o'er-leap,
> For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires!
> Let not light see my black and deep desires.
>
> (48 ff.)

The paradox of these invocations of darkness and deception is that they are being made to the audience: the lies hide from men but face us, and in that respect we enjoy the privilege of God.

The structure of deception takes on another layer in Lady Macbeth's reception of the news of the prophecies. Where Macbeth had been concealed or opaque to Duncan, and was thus in a superior position, manipulating him by

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pretense, we now see Lady Macbeth putting herself in the dominant position, planning to manipulate her husband:

> Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
> What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature,
> It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness
> To catch the nearest way. . . .
> Hie thee hither,
> That I may pour my spirits in thine ear. . . .
> (I, v, 14 ff., 24 ff.)

Macbeth is now transparent to her, and she to us, his ignorance of what she feels about his "human kindness"—she rejects any "compunctious visiting of nature" (44)—making him a victim, or accomplice, who has to be instructed in hypocrisy:

> Your face, my thane, is as a book, where men
> May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
> Look like the time, bear welcome in your eye,
> Your hand, your tongue: look like th' innocent flower,
> But be the serpent under 't.
> (61 ff.)

One of Shakespeare's problems in having to develop an evil conspiracy in the absence of any vocal moral commentary on it is to make it judge or condemn itself. This is done here, partly directly, as in the injunction to be like the serpent, and partly indirectly, in her perversion of such words as "milk" or "nature." Her parting injunction to him is to "look up clear" (71), "clear" meaning "innocent, spotless": the stress must fall on the verb, look or seem.

The dichotomy between appearance and reality, the continuity of metaphors for usurpation applied to Macbeth, the function of the incredible number of antitheses (some four-hundred-odd), these are aspects of the play that have been well studied in modern criticism,[12] and all show its persistent operation on two linguistic levels. It is a textbook for the study of dramatic irony in all its forms. But irony is always double-edged. When Lady Macbeth welcomes Duncan, the fulsome insincerity of her verse is by now apparent to us:

> All our service
> In every point twice done, and then done double,
> Were poor and single business to contend
> Against those honours deep and broad, wherewith
> Your majesty loads our house. . . .
> (I, vi, 14 ff.)

Yet, while she is feigning gratitude she is also expressing exactly the reasons why she ought to feel gratitude:

> for those of old,
> And the late dignities heaped up to them,
> We rest your hermits.
> (18 ff.)

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The unusual and affected word "hermits" points up her insincerity, while the content of the speech establishes the good they have received from Duncan. Shakespeare shows her feigning, but simultaneously condemns her. In the next scene Macbeth, speaking alone and with no need to deceive anyone (hence the convention in Elizabethan drama that what characters say in soliloquy is true), admits fully—and it is a sign of the strong element of goodness in him that he can state the case against himself so fairly—the evil of their deception of Duncan:

> He's here in double trust:
> First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
> Strong both against the deed: then, as his host,
> Who should against his murderer shut the door,
> Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
> Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
> So clear in his great office. . . .
>
> (I, vii, 12 ff.)

Duncan is "clear," has that freedom from guilt or stain that his wife had urged Macbeth to assume: in a sense he tries to do so here, in his defense of Duncan's right to be treated with love and respect, and in his invocation of "pity," that constant test of humanity in Shakespeare. Yet when he expresses this moral sense to his wife—

> We will proceed no further in this business:
> He hath honoured me of late. . . .
>
> (31 f.)

she is able to sweep his scruples aside by mocking his cowardice and by showing her own readiness to be his accomplice in this "terrible feat."

Once the murder is done the hypocrisy must continue: in Marvell's words,

> The same *Arts* that did *gain*
> A *Pow'r* must it *maintain*.[13]

The same insincere welcome comes from Macbeth to Macduff: "The labour we delight in physics pain" (II, iii, 48 f.), and at the news of Duncan's murder Lady Macbeth is given one of the most brilliant pieces of hypocrisy Shakespeare ever invented:

> Woe, alas!
> What, in our house?
>
> (II, iii, 86 f.)

This is what any innocent hostess would say in those circumstances: Lady Macbeth knows exactly how things ought to look (*scheinheilig*, as one says in German). Her husband makes a veritable meal of professing his regrets:

> Had I but died an hour before this chance,
> I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant
> There's nothing serious in mortality:
> All is but toys: renown and grace is dead,
> The wine of life is drawn. . . .
>
> (90 ff.)

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The multiple functions of dramatic irony are apparent here, for this speech is both self-fulfilling—Macbeth will not enjoy any "blessed time" from this point onwards—and literally true, since "grace is dead," and Macbeth has killed it (one of its forms is sleep, which he has also murdered). "The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood / Is stopped," he says to the king's sons, but as Shakespeare soon makes clear, the lifeblood of the whole state has been dammed and perverted.

Throughout *Macbeth* Shakespeare presents the murder of Duncan as one of the foulest deeds imaginable to man, causing correspondent perversions in the whole realm of nature. The hypocrisy of the murderers, then, is the means by which they both gained trust—"Fair and noble hostess, / We are your guest tonight" were among Duncan's last words—and destroyed it. The breakdown of trust which they effect is graphically represented by Shakespeare, first by the way in which the king's sons, fleeing the country, are suspected to have been his killers; and second in the scene where Macduff, who has finally fled Scotland (his wife and children are murdered by Macbeth in his absence), is confronted and tested by Malcolm. The king's son feigns all manner of vice, exceeding even Macbeth—

> I grant him bloody,
> Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
> Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
> That has a name. . . .
>
> (IV, iii, 57 ff.)

—but professing for himself a list of vices so horrible that Macduff is forced to exclaim that if he succeeds to the throne, Scotland will receive a far worse tyrant. At which point Malcolm explains that he was merely pretending, in order to test his countryman, who might have been an emissary of Macbeth's:

> Macduff, this noble passion,
> Child of integrity, hath from my soul
> Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts
> To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth
> By many of these trains hath sought to win me
> Into his power; and modest wisdom plucks me
> From over-credulous haste. . . .
>
> (114 ff.)

Duncan had trusted his kinsman, and host, and been murdered for his pains. If trust is to establish itself again, it has to do so by such devious and long-winded means, and it has to use the tools of its antitype. Paradoxically, only through deception, now, can appearance be distinguished from reality. Malcolm might say, with the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, "Craft against vice I must apply."

Consideration of the nature of hypocrisy in *Macbeth* reinforces our awareness that Shakespeare connects it with all other forms of evil, the initial dissimulation leading to treason, regicide, and the never-ending chain of murder by which Macbeth destroys the whole of Scotland:

> Alas, poor country, . . .!
> It cannot

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> Be called our mother, but our grave;
> . . . the dead man's knell
> Is there scarce asked for who, and good men's lives
> Expire before the flowers in their caps,
> Dying or ere they sicken.
>
> (Iv, iii, 164 ff.)

Macbeth, having used fraud and force to obtain power, can now afford to use force openly. The function of hypocrisy in the initial stage of usurping legitimacy is now clear; once it has gained its desires, evil can afford to declare itself. Yet in Macbeth's case that declaration was not voluntary, or the result of carelessness. His guilt has been exposed by his own actions. The insecurity he feels, knowing that Banquo's children are prophesied to become the lineal kings of Scotland, makes him plan to kill Banquo. In his professed concern for Banquo's welfare (III, i, 11-38), as in his urging on of the murderers (III, i, 73-139), Macbeth displayed some of his earlier resource in hypocrisy, although the scene with the murderers is labored, I believe deliberately, to show how energy and invention are gradually deserting him.

Indeed, he gives to the murderers a remarkably detailed account of why he must use them to kill Banquo: because of

> . . . certain friends that are both his and mine,
> Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall
> Who I myself struck down: and thence it is
> That I to your assistance do make love,
> Masking the business from the common eye,
> For sundry weighty reasons.
>
> (III, i, 119 ff.)

That is almost too explicit in its description of the gap between false surface and his true feelings. But the level of pretense he sustains after the murder is penetrated and exposed by the arrival of the very being whose absence he so insincerely deplores:

> Here had we now our country's honour roofed,
> Were the graced person of our Banquo present, . . .
>
> (III, iv, 40 ff.)

To accuse Banquo of "unkindness," unnatural ingratitude, in not attending, having just had him murdered, is one of the greatest perversions of truth and goodness in Shakespeare, and is immediately answered by the appearance of the ghost. Macbeth defends but at the same time accuses himself:

> Thou canst not say I did it: never shake
> Thy gory locks at me.
>
> (50 f.)

Lady Macbeth succeeds in calming him by her usual tactics of scornful reductivism: "When all's done, / You look but on a stool" (67 f.), and mockery of his

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cowardice: "What! quite unmanned in folly?" (73). So he tries again, but is instinctively led toward his own fatal, self-revealing hypocrisy:

> I drink to th' general joy o' th' whole table,
> And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss,
> Would he were here! to all, and him, we thrist,
> And all to all!
> *Lords. [drinking]* Our duties, and the pledge.
> *Macbeth. [turns to his seat]* Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!
>
> (III, iv, 89 ff.)

The appearance of the ghost to display Macbeth's hypocritical greetings in the very moment when he utters them is Shakespeare's most brilliant device in the "exposure" sequence. (In *Siegfried* Wagner achieved a comparable brilliance in that Siegfried, having been splashed by the blood of the dragon he has killed, wins the ability to penetrate the hypocrisy of Mime, who is made to profess good while simultaneously revealing the real evil he intends.)

The workings of some obscure principle of retribution, Macbeth believes—"It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood" (122)—have here "brought forth / The secret'st man of blood" (125 f.). The exposure of his hypocrisy has been made by some innate moral principle in the universe. The same principle is at work in the other great invention in this play, Lacy Macbeth's sleepwalking. That she, who has always denied any further consequences of their evil—

> A little water clears us of this deed:
> How easy is it then!
>
> (II, ii, 67 f.)

—should now collapse under it, is a vindication of the powers of good, operating in so many different ways in the second half of this play. This "great perturbation in nature" (V, i, 9 f.) causes her to reveal all their deeds, an effect made much more intense in the theater by the Doctor writing down all that she says, so that hypocrisy is not only detected but recorded.

> *Lady Macbeth*. Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?
> *Doctor*. Do you mark that?
>
> (V, i, 38 ff.)

As she reveals more, the Doctor turns to rebuke Lady Macbeth's gentlewoman for having heard these secrets of state:

> *Doctor*. Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.
> *Gentlewoman:* She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that: heaven knows what she has known.
>
> (45 ff.)

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Yet the audience, divine in that, now also knows. As the Doctor gives the conventional lore of his day, a blend of ethics and medicine:

> unnatural deeds
> Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds
> To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.
> More needs she the divine than the physician.
>
> (70 ff.)

we see that we are also those "deaf pillows," that the masking and unmasking has been all for our sake. The superiority of *Macbeth* over *Measure for Measure* in this respect is that we have no external moral force, such as the Duke, to "Unfold the evil, which is here wrapp'd up / In countenance." Evil expresses and exposes *itself* now, as an organic extension of its own workings. Evil may corrode trust, but it also destroys the healthy functioning of all who give themselves over to it. The Ghost of Banquo is more than a figment of Macbeth's imagination: it stands in some way in relation to his conscience. It lacks the grandeur of Macbeth's earlier apocalyptic image of pity,

> like a naked new-born babe,
> Striding the blast, or Heaven's cherubim, horsed
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air. . . .
>
> (I, vii, 21 ff.)

Yet it is no less the response to what Macbeth knows as a "horrid deed." Devastating though it is in its presentation of the destructive power of guilt, *Macbeth* may be thought a comforting play, finally, in that hypocrisy exposes itself.

IV

No such comforts can be gleaned from *Othello*. Indeed, it remains the most uncomfortable play in the English language. Everyone must admire it as a supreme example of the unremitting development of one basic situation, Iago's destruction of Othello, with a claustrophilic refusal to digress or vary from its path, yet no one is known to have enjoyed it. Every time I start to read it my spirits sink. But neither Shakespeare's tragedies nor life itself can be fully understood unless we are prepared to take Iago fully into our consciousness, and make our own attempt to come to terms with what Shakespeare created. (What hand or eye, we may well ask, could afford to gestate such a thing for the three to six months Shakespeare usually took to write a play? To live with Iago as a reader, or in the theater, is bad enough; to create him shows an ability to conceive evil that almost strikes us as perverse and unnatural. Except . . .)

I define the basic situation as that of Iago destroying Othello, since I believe that much modern criticism of the play has gone wrong through beginning with Othello, or through not giving Iago his full measure of dominance. This is not the place to show the history of this misinterpretation, so I will merely say that discussions of the play ought to start from the beginning, as Shakespeare did, with the presence of Iago. It is a presence that dominates the action, first of all in its intimacy with the audience. No one else in the tragedies has as many solilo-

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quies as Iago does (not even Hamlet). Hamlet is given soliloquies for reflection, self-criticism, and for resolves to act (some of which are carried out); Iago has them for self-presentation and for announcements of his actions (which are first described, then performed, and subsequently commented on). He is forever telling us what he will do and why, forever taking us into his confidence. Now, there is no one in the world whose confidence I would rather share less than Iago's, and that is one of the reasons for the discomfort we feel each time we experience this play. We are confronted with a man whose sole aim in life is to manipulate and destroy others, a dedication to evil that even Macbeth and his wife do not match. They want power, and will destroy to gain it; Iago wants the power to destroy. They can work by fraud and open force; he only by fraud, through which his gulls are made to use force. Whereas they expose themselves by coming to power, he can remain concealed indefinitely. Every word Iago speaks to us is a demonstration, an exposure, and a revelling in his own hypocrisy, which remains completely concealed from all the other characters in the play.

The only person in the play to whom he reveals some of his real feelings is Roderigo, but even then he is using him as a tool, spending his money and working him up to be the accomplice in his attack on Othello. Iago's first stated reason for hating his master is that he has been passed over in favor of "a great arithmetician," a "counter-caster," Michael Cassio (I, i, 19-31). Iago's contempt for the new breed of Renaissance soldier, necessarily more technical given the increasingly scientific development of warfare in the sixteenth century, may be intended to show that his complaint is the predictable and irrelevant grumble of the old-fashioned soldier made obsolete by new techniques. There is not enough evidence to decide this issue, but there is enough to be sure what we should feel about the conclusions he draws about his attitude to Othello:

> I follow him to serve my turn upon him.
> We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
> Cannot be truly followed.
>
> (I, i, 42 ff.)

One part of this antithesis follows—some men must be servants—but not the other: Why cannot all masters be served "truly"? Iago describes those who serve "duteously" with a series of contemptuous images, ending "Whip me such honest knaves" (44-51). He then holds up his own ideal, a calculated inversion of all good service which in a normal man might be the text for a denunciation of "seeming":

> Others there are
> Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,
> Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves;
> And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,
> Do well thrive by them; and, when they've lined their coats,
> Do themselves homage.
>
> (I, i, 49 ff.)

At this point, normally, the attack on evil would be made; but Iago identifies himself with this group.

> . . . These fellows have some soul,
> And such a one do I profess myself.
>
> (53 ff.)

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The elevation of false appearance is made by no one in Shakespeare with the same fanaticism as Iago, for whom it becomes a principle of life. He does not serve out of "love and duty," but only "seeming so," for his own ends: "I am not what I am" (59 ff.). It is difficult for a modern audience, which has lost that sense of reverence attaching to "service" that animated Renaissance society, from the glorification of the *vita activa* down to the duties of bondsmen and tenants, to fully appreciate the shock that these self-revelations would have had. Iago systematically inverts all the great positives of dedication and loyalty, offers in their place an unnatural egoism. (Note the awkward self-reflexive phrasing of such men having "their hearts attending on themselves," doing "themselves homage," or in Iago saying "I follow but myself." All three phrases describe forms of impossibility: language can say it, but a man cannot do it—unless he has two selves.)

This first scene establishes Iago as a hypocrite and as a rapacious egoist, the same combination that we observed in *Macbeth*, the one state creating and supporting the other. Having declared to Roderigo his true feelings about Othello, Iago later explains that he professes love out of self-interest:

> Though I do hate him as I do hell-pains,
> Yet, for necessity of present life,
> I must show out a flag and sign of love,
> Which is indeed but sign.
>
> (I, i, 155 ff.)

Immediately afterwards we see Iago telling Othello of Brabantio's anger, and claiming that "I lack iniquity / Sometimes to do me service," else, "with the little godliness" he had, he would have attacked Roderigo (I, ii, 3 ff.). That total reversal of the truth is prophetic of Iago's methods. He deceives those near to him by his professions of love—"A man he is of honesty and trust," Othello says (I, iii, 284); Iago calls Roderigo "noble heart" (I, iii, 302) and swears fidelity to him:

> *Roderigo.* Wilt thou be fast to my hopes if I depend on the issue?
> *Iago.* Thou art sure of me.
>
> (I, iii, 360 ff.)

—yet as soon as they have left the scene he turns to us and shows his loathing and contempt:

> Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;
> For I mine own gained knowledge should profane
> If I would time expend with such a snipe
> But for my sport and profit.
>
> (I, iii, 381 ff.)

That Othello should trust him, merely makes him a gull:

> He holds me well;
> The better shall my purpose work on him.
>
> (398 f.)

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The cumulative effect of these direct revelations of his intentions is to make us highly alert to Iago's language when he is with other people. Since we know that he is out to deceive and destroy, everything he says has a second meaning to us. If the normal description of the linguistic sign, following Saussure, is Signified over Signifier, then when Iago speaks we have to enclose that whole sign in another bracket, which would invert it, opposing surface and real meaning. (This is a necessarily more complicated formulation than Saussure's, since linguistics is usually concerned with "normal" communication, not with irony, hypocrisy, or lying.) Listening to Iago is a double process of decoding: deciphering his utterance in the way that his dupes understand it, and decoding it again to understand how he meant it. The two signals are discrepant, on a scale ranging from partial to total incongruence. We are somehow able to perform both operations simultaneously.

A clear-cut instance of these inversions of meaning is the sequence in act II where Iago engineers the downfall of Cassio. He instructs Roderigo to "find some occasion to anger Cassio":

> Sir, he's rash and very sudden in choler, and haply may strike at you—provoke him that he may; for even out of that will I cause these of Cyprus to mutiny. . . .
>
> (II, i, 261 ff.)

(These are the tactics by which the Tribunes ejected Coriolanus from office and from society.) When Roderigo, "this poor trash of Venice," leaves, Iago tells us that his plan is still vague, but he intends to bring Othello to the point where surface and reality are so inverted that he will "thank" Iago for making him an ass,

> And practising upon his peace and quiet
> Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confused;
> Knavery's plain face is never seen till used.
>
> (II, i, 302 ff.)

In the event, Iago succeeds in making Cassio drunk, proceeds to "put" him into an "action" that—just like the Tribunes' manipulation— degrades him yet "approves my dream" (II, iii, 58 ff.) (his fantasy or plan of success). To Montano, Iago lies that Cassio is always drunk and professes to "fear the trust Othello puts him in" (121-131). Montano reacts to this inversion of the truth with the correct response (assuming it to be true) which Iago has elicited from him, namely that Othello ought to be told; at which point Iago demurs:

> Not I, for this fair island:
> I do love Cassio well, and would do much
> To cure him of this evil.
>
> (II, iii, 143 ff.)

From that declaration, after the ensuing brawl, Iago has built himself a platform from which he can now act the perfect friend:

> I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth
> Than it should do offence to Michael Cassio;
> Yet, I persuade myself, to speak the truth
> Shall nothing wrong him.
>
> (217 ff.)

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As we alone know, to get the truth from what Iago says about Cassio one must simply invert everything he says. The climax of his tale is to profess to excuse Cassio—"But men are men; the best sometimes forget" (237)—an extremely effective way of indicting him in the eyes of those present. If hypocrisy formally resembles irony in operating on two levels in its systematic inversion of the truth, Iago here uses an old form of irony, the mock-apologia, which is really an attack. Othello, who only has Iago's word to go on, falls into the trap:

> I know, Iago,
> Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,
> Making it light to Cassio.
>
> (II, iii, 243 ff.)

So Cassio is displaced.

Our feelings for Iago are a mixture of loathing and respect, or fear, at the resource of his deceptions, for there seem to be no limits to his skill. Only a few moments later he is being sympathetic with Cassio—"What, are you hurt, lieutenant? . . . Marry, heaven forbid!"—and gradually winning his confidence (259-328) until he can, tentatively, inquire whether he is being trusted:

> *Iago.* (I think [you think {I love you}])

—my metaphor of Iago's signals set in brackets explains that formulation!—

> *Cassio.* I have well approved it, sir.
>
> (304 ff.)

Caught! When Iago outlines his plan to regain Othello's respect through the intervention of Desdemona, Cassio is grateful:

> *Cassio.* You advise me well.
> *Iago.* I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness.
> *Cassio.* I think it freely. . . .
>
> (II, iii, 319 ff.)

The point that this sequence establishes is that Cassio, like Roderigo before him, and like Othello, and Desdemona after him, trusts Iago and believes that he has appeared in the nick of time, solely in order to help him. Iago seems to be acting wholly for the others' good, since, as he challenges us to deny, "this advice I give is free and honest. / Probal to thinking" (330 f.). The gulls can see the help and benefit they receive from Iago's service, but cannot see, or conceive, that Iago could be benefiting himself at the same time; and no one could see that Iago is in fact benefiting himself by destroying them. As he explains to us his brilliant plot to tell Othello that Desdemona wants Cassio recalled only to satisfy "her body's lust," we see that the more she strives on behalf of Cassio the more she will damage herself. Iago not only knows no altruism in himself, he blocks and destroys it in others:

> So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
> And out of her goodness make the net
> That shall enmesh them all.
>
> (II, iii, 350 ff.)

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Iago's practice of inversion, by which he can destroy Cassio while making him and others believe him to be Cassio's friend, and by which he can turn Desdemona's purity into a black, viscous liquid that will catch his victims like birds in quicklime, has been fully established by Shakespeare and shown to be successful. Whatever Iago predicts he will do, he performs. Setting Cassio up for his plots, he so manages to present the image of the faithful friend that—as he predicted Othello would—the dupe actually thanks him:

> I humbly thank you for 't. I never knew
> A Florentine more kind and honest.
>
> (III, i, 39 f.)

Even Emilia is deceived by his concern on behalf of Cassio: "I warrant it grieves my husband / As if the case were his"—"O, that's an honest fellow," agrees Desdemona (III, iii, 3ff.). In *Much Ado about Nothing* the villainous Borachio, tool of the malcontent Don John, exults at the success of his deception:

> I have deceived even your very eyes.
>
> (V, i, 238 f.)

This is what Iago now does to Othello. He uses the same methods as with the other five people he has so far deceived, his "outward action" being the opposite of the "native act and figure" of his heart, but he carries the principle of inversion much further. Whereas the hypocrite normally deceives other people's vision of himself, making them see good where he means evil, Iago manages to transmit that doubleness into their vision of the rest of the world. He has convinced Roderigo that Othello's attraction for Desdemona is purely sensual, will soon be satiated, and that then Desdemona will love him; even though the dupe is constantly doubting that vision, Iago manages to sustain it for as long as he needs to. He convinces Roderigo that Cassio is a rival likely to seduce Desdemona, and makes Othello and Montano see Cassio as a drunken and irresponsible officer. All these, we know, are inversions of the truth, yet by using himself as a reference point, Iago can convince people to the stage where they accept his view unquestioningly. He is like the filter used in filmmaking to reverse daylight and night effects, a technique known as "day for night." Or, as he puts it himself,

> Divinity of hell!
> When devils will the blackest sins put on,
> They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
> As I do now.
>
> (II, iii, 343 ff.)

Iago's most brilliant inversion of vision is reserved for Othello, to which, indeed, all the other inversions have been preliminary. The sequence begins when Cassio, brought to Desdemona by Emilia (the unwitting intermediary of evil), leaves in some embarrassment when he sees Othello and Iago approach:

> *Iago.* Ha! I like not that.
> *Othello.* What dost thou say?
> *Iago.* Nothing, my lord; or if—I know not what.
> *Othello.* Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?

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Iago. Cassio, my lord! No, sure, I cannot think it,
That he would steal away so guilty-like,
Seeing you coming.
Othello. I do believe 'twas he.

(III, iii, 35 ff.)

Iago moves from an upper plane (Signifier) to a lower (Signified), from perception to interpretation: subtly doubting the former—*Was that Cassio leaving your wife*—so that Othello, who thinks he can trust his own eyes, takes the latter—*so guiltily*—with it, accepting a—false!—linguistic sign. Iago returns to the process, with a series of hints and insinuations, having asked whether Cassio knew of Othello's love for Desdemona:

Othello. He did, from first to last. Why dost thou ask?
Iago. But for a satisfaction of my thought;
No further harm.

(III, iii, 96 ff.)

As Othello tells him that Cassio had even gone between them, Iago appears surprised—"Indeed!"—and takes refuge behind a series of evasive answers—"Honest, my lord?" "My lord, for aught I know"—"Think, my lord?" (95 ff.). "Discern'st thou aught in that?" Othello asks, seeing that Iago [*is transmitting the signal that he*] has something on his mind. (It would be tedious to write it out each time, but the italicized phrase in brackets represents our recognition of the constructed signal that Iago emits.) Othello sees the surface doubts, is made to suspect that there is something behind them, is led on to discover what Iago wants him to discover. The hypocrite offers the gull a surface falseness which he penetrates to discover a truth, but which we know is another falseness. Iago's technique of holding off exacerbates Othello's curiosity, arouses his suspicions, and destroys his trust in appearance, in his own perception of reality. The reason why (to answer an old critical fallacy) he does not go and ask Desdemona whether she is Cassio's lover is that, by the end of this scene, he no longer believes what she—or anyone but Iago—would tell him. And to answer a more recent fallacy, it is not the case that Othello *wants* to believe what Iago tells him, or is an accomplice in this destruction of the truth. He is an accomplice, in the sense that everyone who joins another in decoding a linguistic sign cooperates with them in the establishment of its meaning; but we can see that the sign Iago offers him is just the opposite of what Othello wants to believe, or has believed till now. (Of course, no utterances are safe from the post-Freudian trick of claiming that they mean the opposite of what they say, but in the interpretation of literary texts we must be given additional, fairly unequivocal evidence of a discrepancy between speech and meaning, as we are given for Iago, but not for Othello.)

What Iago does is to prove that, in the right context, anyone can be made to believe anything. Even a slight knowledge of modern political or social or religious history will make us accept this truth at once. Iago works on Othello's vision-interpretation until he replaces it with his own. It is a form of brainwashing, or what that pioneer in the study of learning processes, Gregory Bateson, called corrective learning, that information-seeking activity whereby a person attempts to "achieve a congruence between 'something in his head' and

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the external world . . . by altering what is in his head"[14]—only in this case it is what is in Iago's head. "If thou dost love me," Othello says to Iago, "Show me thy thought"; earlier he had said that Iago hesitated,

> As if there were some monster in thy thought
> Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something.
> (III, *iii*, 110 ff.)

By being shown Iago's thought, Othello comes to think it. The whole process is a transference of vision by which, under the pressure of negative feedback, Othello learns to see, and think, like Iago: "I prithee, speak to me as to thy thinkings / As thou dost ruminate," he begs him, "give thy worst of thoughts / The worst of words" (134 ff.). The irony of this and similar appeals (145 ff., 149 ff., 164 f.) is painful, knowing what we do of Iago's purpose and methods. Having brought Othello to the point where he proclaims "I'll see before I doubt," and when he knows, "Away at once with love or jealousy!" (191 ff.), Iago can take a stand with every appearance of confidence:

> I am glad of it; for now I shall have reason
> To show the love and duty that I bear you
> With franker spirit. Therefore, as I am bound,
> Receive it from me.
> (195 ff.)

Yet from that firm-sounding position he lapses into uncertainty—"I speak not yet of proof" (ironically true!)—but an uncertainty that suggests far more than it states, with its rash of words for perception and deception ("look," "observe," "wear your eye thus," "not . . . secure," "abused," "look," "know," "see . . . pranks," "show," "conscience," "keep't unknown"). "If you dissemble sometimes your knowledge of that you are thought to know," wrote Francis Bacon, "you shall be thought another time to know that you know not."[15] Othello's vision of Iago gives him total credit:

> This honest creature doubtless
> Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds.
> (244 f.)

With the vision of Iago, Othello also takes over his language, as critics have long noted, with its bestial images, but also his attitudes, especially a generalized distrust of women. (Iago's misogyny has deep roots in his psyche.)

Iago's transplantation of his own inverted values to Othello is Shakespeare's most remarkable development of the inherent dynamic of hypocrisy. Iago continues in other, more familiar postures, professing love to Othello and Desdemona (III, iii, 119 ff., 136 ff., 196 ff., 213 ff., 218 f., 225) and feigning a sympathy for their sufferings which we know to be a covert expression of his gloating:

> *Iago.* I see this hath a little dashed your spirits.
> *Othello.* Not a jot, not a jot.
> *Iago.* In faith, I fear it has.
> (216 f.)

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"I am sorry to hear this" (346), he says, having just exulted to us, *en clair*, that

> The Moor already changes with my poison:
> Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons . . .
> Look where he comes! Not poppy, nor mandragora

will ever restore to him his peace and quiet (328 ff.). The inversion technique works, too, by suggestion. When Othello swears revenge, Iago offers himself to "obey . . . without remorse, / What bloody business ever" (469 f.)—that is, he means, the bloodier the better. Inversion also works by forbidding what you want the other to do: Iago will kill Cassio, but as for Desdemona—"let her live," he suggests, knowing that Othello will immediately say "Damn her, lewd minx!" and look for "some swift means of death / For the fair devil" (475 ff.). Iago can turn anything into its opposite: under his tuition even Othello becomes a hypocrite, with difficulty ("O, hardness to dissemble!" he says, like Coriolanus: III, iv, 34), feigning "a salt and sorry rheum" so that Desdemona will give him the handkerchief (III, iv, 51 f.). Since she has lost it, she is forced to lie, too (85 ff.). Iago turns them all into hypocrites.

Iago's technique of offering a false surface, designed to appear false and encourage his dupe to penetrate to what is only another false bottom, reaches its climax at the opening of act IV, where master and pupil enter, already engaged in conversation:

> *Iago.* Will you think so?
> *Othello.* Think so, Iago!
> *Iago.* What,
> To kiss in private?
> *Othello.* An unauthorized kiss.
> *Iago.* Or to be naked with her friend in bed
> An hour or more, not meaning any harm?
> *Othello.* Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm!
> It is hypocrisy against the devil.
>
> (IV, i, 1 ff.)

That Othello should be accusing Cassio and Desdemona of hypocrisy is the sign of Iago's total triumph in the false interpretation of perception. Here there is not even anything to perceive, just words that purport to represent deeds. "Hath he said anything?" asks Othello about Cassio, and Iago replies yes, but

> No more than he'll unswear.
> *Othello.* What hath he said?
> *Iago.* Faith, that he did—I know not what he did.
> *Othello.* What? What?
> *Iago.* Lie—
> *Othello.* With her?
> *Iago.* With her, on her; what you will.
> *Othello.* Lie with her! lie on her!—We say lie on her, when they belie her—Lie with her! 'Zounds, that's fulsome!
>
> (29 ff.)

Othello's collapse into prose, and madness, comes when his worst suspicions, aroused by Iago, are given verbal form. Iago's manipulation of the verbal sign

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was never more brilliant, for he has only to offer the Signifier, "Lie"—which could mean "tell an untruth"—for Othello to snatch the Signified, "lie with," which has been planted in his consciousness so remorselessly. It is indeed a case of "what you will" in decoding this and all other linguistic signs, but it is Iago who has made Othello construe it in that manner, and will continue to do so. Shakespeare makes the point about interpretation that modern research in theories of vision and the education of young children has confirmed—that we are all taught to see—by Iago's prediction of the view that Othello, hidden in the normally superior position of the eavesdropper, will take of his imminent conversation with Cassio:

> As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad;
> And his unbookish jealousy must construe
> Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and light behaviours,
> Quite in the wrong.
>
> (100 ff.)

After the scene has turned out exactly as predicted, Iago checks on his victim's responses:

> *Iago.* Did you perceive how he laughed at his vice?
> *Othello.* O Iago!
> *Iago.* And did you see the handkerchief?
> *Othello.* Was that mine?
> *Iago.* Yours, by this hand—
>
> (170 ff.)

The Signifier here, the handkerchief, has been made by Iago to yield a meaning which is totally false, but which he has put upon it with so much circumstantial detail—Shakespeare's diligence in this point risks pushing his plot into the incredible—that Othello can only see it as a present that Cassio has received from Desdemona and has "given . . . his whore."

Iago's dominance of Othello's eyes and brain is total; indeed he now begins to destroy his memory. We see Othello clutching at the last flickers of his memory of Desdemona as she was, for him [*and as of course she still is*]:

> *Othello.* A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman!
> *Iago.* Nay, you must forget that.
> *Othello.* Ay, let her rot, and perish, and be damned tonight. . . .
> O, the world hath not a sweeter creature. . . .
> *Iago.* Nay, that's not your way.
>
> (178 ff.)

Not your way, because not my way. Iago soon brings him back to the "foul" image: "I will chop her into messes—cuckold me!" Othello ends up with the same poisoned suspicions as Iago, who had earlier confessed that he suspects both Othello and Cassio of having cuckolded him with Emilia (II, i, 285 ff.): is there any other instance of a man transferring to another his own sexual paranoia? From Iago, too, Othello has caught the habit of repeating a word, dwelling on it to debase it or bring out a sinister double meaning (compare Iago on "virtue" and "blest": I, iii, 318 ff.; II, i, 245 ff.). So Othello seizes on Lodovico's

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request that Desdemona should return with a series of puns on "turn" in its sexual sense (IV, i, 254 ff.), and, more painfully, on "committed" (IV, ii, 71 ff.). Othello cannot now see anything but dirt, Iago's dirt. When he had been keeping Desdemona company, awaiting Othello's arrival from Venice, Iago had entertained them with impromptu (and bitter) rhymes, describing his imagination's preliminary working (the rhetorical process of *inventio*) in these terms:

> I am about it; but indeed my invention comes from my pate as birdlime does from frieze—it plucks out brains and all.
>
> (II, i, 125 ff.)

Frieze is a coarse woollen cloth, birdlime a viscous stuff used to entangle: the destructive collocation of the two seems an apt metaphor for Iago's "invention."

Shakespeare's remorselessness in *Othello*, his refusal to be deflected from his single path, is reinforced by the obsessive nature of his characters. Iago only ever talks about destroying Othello and Desdemona, has even forgotten about his own career, and Othello has taken over his obsessions. When Cassio has been attacked by Iago, apparently murdered, Othello lauds his master's example:

> O brave Iago, honest and just,
> That has such noble sense of thy friend's wrong!
> Thou teachest me: minion, your dear lies dead,
> And your unblest fate hies! Strumpet, I come!
>
> (V, i, 31 ff.)

The murder scene, with its marvelously wrought language, a ceremony that Othello thinks of as a sacrifice, is the most fictitious scene in Shakespeare—not a word in it that Othello says is true. Desdemona is not a whore, he is not "Justice" (V, ii, 17), and when he kills her—"I that am cruel am yet merciful" (90)—we see that he has even learned Iago's trick of euphemism (cf. Roderigo's reaction to being urged to effect "the removing of Cassio": IV, ii, 228 ff.). Iago has led Othello to where he had predicted, caused the people he hates to destroy each other. His revenge (whatever the provocation) seems complete! But just at this point Iago makes his single mistake. Following the Machiavellian rule of killing your catspaws before they can betray you, he stabs Roderigo, exclaiming the while, "Kill men i' th' dark! Where be these bloody thieves?" (that has something of Richard III's panache about it), and protests that "Here's Cassio hurt by villains" (V, i, 62, ff.)—namely himself and Roderigo—while offering hypocritical sympathy to him. But he puts himself too completely into the role of the good man here, behaving, like Lady Macbeth, as one ought to behave, for he sends his wife on an errand:

> Emilia, run you to the citadel,
> And tell my lord and lady what hath happed.
>
> (V, i, 126 f.)

Perhaps he has forgotten that his lord ought to be murdering his lady just at this juncture; or perhaps he thinks Emilia is as corrupt as himself; or perhaps he does not understand love. The error is great, since Emilia is the only person who

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knows the truth about the handkerchief. She has already suspected that Othello's erroneous view of Desdemona is a malicious fiction put out by some Machiavel:

> I will be hanged, if some eternal villain . . .
> Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,
> Have not devised this slander;
>
> (IV, ii, 131 ff.)

and—as we know, but Iago evidently does not—she loves her mistress. Sent by Iago, coming upon Othello just after the murder, Emilia's love and integrity cause her to denounce her husband, even at the cost of her own life. It is ironic that the hypocrite, who is seen throughout with a neurotic distrust of women, and whose every second word to his wife is an insult, should finally be exposed by a woman he had trusted, from whom he had snatched the handkerchief without even thinking her worth swearing to secrecy (III, iii, 320 ff.). Iago's hatred of women undoes him.

In the final reckoning, truth is restored. Emilia reveals that she found the handkerchief ("Villainous whore!," and "Filth," he calls her), and with her dying breath—that most crucial of all utterances to Renaissance beliefs—proclaims her integrity:

> So come my soul to bliss, as I speak true;
> So speaking as I think, alas, I die.
>
> (V, ii, 253 f.)

The agony of Othello's realization that he has been duped into killing Desdemona is one of the two or three most intense sequences in Shakespeare. Lodovico gives an external judgment on him that is essentially right:

> O thou Othello, that wert once so good,
> Fallen in the practice of a damned slave . . .
>
> (293 f.)

Yet Othello has the integrity not to make excuses for his error, to accept his responsibility, equate himself with the "malignant and turbaned Turk," and execute himself. Now and not before, he is Justice with its sword. Iago, that "Spartan dog," is given his final share of responsibility:

> Look on the tragic loading of this bed—
> This is thy work. The object poisons sight;
> Let it be hid.
>
> (364 ff.)

Just as Iago poisoned sight, so do the fruits of his action. In Shakespearian tragedy, hypocrisy is not only a poison in itself but the cause of ever greater destruction.

V

The challenge of integrity against hypocrisy, made by Emilia at the very end of *Othello,* is placed first in *King Lear.* As the king abdicates, he divides up

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his kingdom as a dower for his three daughters, and orders them—"Tell me, my daughters"—to declare the quantity of their love:

> Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
> That we our largest bounty may extend
> Where nature doth with merit challenge.
>
> (I, i, 48 ff.)

Lear speaks again at line 62, and in the meantime not one but two of his daughters speak, one to him and one to the audience. Goneril declares an absolute love, beyond expression:

> Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter;
> Dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty;
> Beyond what can be valued rich or rare;
> No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour,
>
> (55 ff.)

and so forth. It is a speech of effusive praise, which if it were true, would make her an exceptionally loving child. Its tone is such that Cordelia tells us, alone, that she cannot compete with it:

> What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent.
>
> (62)

Already we have that dichotomy between words and deeds that typifies hypocrisy, and which runs throughout the play. Cordelia is equating her sisters' words with falseness, her silence with love.

Lear is evidently pleased with what Goneril has said, since he awards her a rich part of England, and moves on to the second movement, where again two daughters speak. Regan declares her love to be identical with Goneril's, only that she has understated it (we had scarce thought it possible to go beyond Goneril):

> Only she comes too short: that I profess
> Myself an enemy to all other joys
> Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
> And find I am alone felicitate
> In your dear highness' love.
>
> (69 ff.)

To claim that your love for your father exceeds all the joys which can be derived from the senses—with your newly wedded husband standing by—is to claim too much. Cordelia again comments, criticizing that profession:

> Then poor Cordelia!
> And yet not so; since I am sure my love's
> More ponderous than my tongue.
>
> (76 ff.)

Deeds against words, truth against fiction, integrity against hypocrisy: that is the position of Cordelia. Her father's loving- (or lying-) competition, designed though it may be to give her the best part of England (which he is also giving

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himself, of course, since he intends to live in retirement with her), and revealing, in a way, his love for her, is nevertheless so constructed that she would have to compete with hypocrisy in order to win. Lear is quantifying love, confusing it with other things that can be measured, weighed, counted. Cordelia, like Coriolanus, is being forced into a ceremony in which she would have to be false to her own nature. Lear pretends to be offering a gift, but is in fact extorting a bribe. She refuses to play the game according to these rules: "Nothing."

As we experience act I, scene i, of *King Lear* for the first time, it is not easy to see that Cordelia is right, the others wrong. By the time we reach the end of the scene we see that this is how it is, for the fulsome praisers of their father put aside their hypocrisy and, left alone with each other, and with us, reveal their true nature:

> *Goneril*. You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little: he always lov'd our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.
> *Regan*. 'Tis the infirmity of his age; Yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.
>
> (I, i, 288 ff.)

They are not only cold and censorious—"unruly waywardness . . . infirm and choleric years . . . unconstant starts"—but end by planning some form of counteraction: "We shall further think on it"—"We must do something, and i' th' heat" (307 f.). Structurally, left alone onstage after the main figures have left, plotting behind Lear's back, they are exactly in the position of Iago, or the Tribunes in *Coriolanus*. We see that Cordelia's judgment of them was correct:

> I know you what you are;
> And like a sister am most loath to call
> Your faults as they are named. Love well our father;
> To your professed bosoms I commit him. . . .
>
> (269 ff.)

As they taunt her for her disobedience she replies

> Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides;
> Who covers faults, at last with shame derides.
>
> (280 f.)

The metaphor of covering, and exposing, falseness (as used by Isabella, we recall) describes the whole career of the hypocrite within literary form. By her stand we judge them, and we see that Cordelia's calm statement of her love for her father, her refusal to compete in extravagant adulation, was the result not of some inherent coldness but of integrity under unusual and unnatural pressure. She was only like this in response to Lear's perverted claim: the rest of the play shows that there is no one more loving. As Kent tells Lear,

> Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
> Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds
> Reverb no hollowness.
>
> (152 ff.)

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Sent into banishment for opposing his master, Kent can give his moral support to Cordelia (in terms that echo Emilia's dying words):

> The Gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
> That justly think'st and has most rightly said!
> *[To Goneril and Regan]* And your large speeches may your deeds approve,
> That good effects may spring from words of love.
>
> (182 ff.)

The division is clear-cut, and it is right.

The first scene in the main plot of *King Lear* opposes and discriminates its protagonists. Cordelia, Kent, and France, who stand up to Lear, and whose judgment mutually reinforces one another, are right then, and are shown to be right by the way the action develops. Lear himself soon regrets his decision. Two scenes later we see Goneril instructing her servant Oswald to be rude to Lear, put on "weary negligence," and bring the issue to a violent state: "What grows of it, no matter . . . I would breed from hence occasions" (I, iii, 8-26). The tactics of Iago against Cassio, the Tribunes against Coriolanus, work, as they must always work, given human nature and the will to manipulate it. Lear is offended by Oswald's negligence (I, iv, 47 ff.), and his new servant (Kent, returned in disguise) shows his loyalty by tripping up this "clotpoll." Goneril thereby gains the pretext she had wanted to "speak," and accuses Lear and his knights of all manner of disorder, "epicurism and lust" (209-222, 245-259). Immediately angry, manipulated by these evidently false accusations (like Coriolanus, Lear cannot see that the whole purpose of them is to make him angry), Lear regrets the "most small fault" that had caused him to disown Cordelia (275 ff.), curses Goneril with appalling violence (284 ff.), and sweeps off to Regan. But as we know in advance, the two sisters are in communication by letter, and have established a joint policy of provocation. Face to face with him (the first time since receiving their inheritance from him), they attack his claimed need for a hundred knights. Although at one point Lear is willing to return to Goneril, since she seems to be allowing him fifty knights, Regan only twenty-five, so that

> Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,
> And thou art twice her love
>
> (II, iv, 260 ff.)

—a quantification of love that would be comic were it not that its effects are so awful—Lear becomes enraged by the two of them, and prefers "To wage against the enmity o' th' air" than live with them. So he goes out into the storm and into wild nature, together with "the wolf and the owl," while his daughters and son-in-law close their doors on him (306 ff.).

The development of this part of the plot is swift, Lear's impatient anger leading him from one self-imposed crisis to another. His methods of computation may be ridiculous, but he is right to think that they do not love him, and his sense of bitter ingratitude causes his madness. They, for their part, attempt to justify their actions to each other, hypocrisy apparently continuing by habit

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(since there is no one onstage whom they need to deceive, perhaps they are listening to their own lies):

> *Regan.* This house is little: the old man and's people
> Cannot be well bestow'd.
> *Goneril.* 'Tis his own blame; hath put himself from rest,
> And must needs taste his folly.
> *Regan.* For his particular, I'll receive him gladly,
> But not one follower.
> *Goneril.* So am I purpos'd.
>
> (II, iv, 290 ff.)

The truth is transparent, however; indeed, when Gloucester reports that the king is leaving, Goneril says, "My Lord, entreat him by no means to stay" (301). Having just received the whole kingdom from him, they can't wait to get rid of him. Lear is now experiencing the truth of La Rochefoucauld's maxim that "So long as a man is still in a position to help others he will rarely encounter ingratitude."[16] Yet, although sinned against, Lear is also sinning. He had devised a purely verbal test of his daughters' love, and while a practitioner of Practical Criticism could soon have told him what was wrong with Goneril and Regan from their speeches alone, there was apparently no way in which he could discriminate them from Cordelia. But, as Iago says, "Knavery's plain face is never seen till used" (II, i, 306). Goneril and Regan used fraud to gain power, and now that they have it, no longer need to dissimulate. Their false show, like that of Iago, is the pivot on which the whole action turns. Yet while he had to start from scratch, foment hatred, poison sight, and invert reality to set his chosen enemies against each other, all that Goneril and Regan have to do is to make the kind of noises Lear expects to hear, to get a third of Britain; indeed, since Cordelia won't flatter, they get her part too, and even her coronet as an unlooked-for bonus, Lear's only "free gift," to use the language of modern advertising promotions ("This coronet part between you": I, i, 139). The hypocrites take, or are given, all, and once they have it, show their real selves. No other hypocrites in Shakespeare gain so much so quickly, so easily, and can afford to drop pretense so fast.

The first scene of the subplot also opposes and discriminates its protagonists. Whereas Goneril and Regan had been shown to us first in disguise, and then in reality, Edmund begins in reality, and only adopts disguise when his father enters. Hypocrisy is a key element in this plot, too, with the difference that while they started near the top of society and were on the verge of receiving power at the very beginning, he—as a bastard son who is only just back from having spent nine years abroad (the typical occupation for one who has no prospect of inheritance in his own country) and is due to go again—starts very much lower down in society, virtually at the bottom. He has to do more than they do, and he has to keep it up for much longer. From his first soliloquy (I, ii) to his last (V, i), Edmund's hypocrisy stretches across the play, a freewheeling career of pretense in the service of egoism. Like Iago, like Goneril and Regan, he pretends in order to acquire. Since he is well built, and inventive, he argues (in a travesty of logic that echoes Iago's at a similar point, the thinness of the pretext

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revealing the strength of the desire), he has a right to the land reserved for the son born "by order of law":

> Well then,
> Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:
> Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
> As to th' legitimate.
>
> (I, ii, 15 ff.)

Since Gloucester loves both sons equally, that means that both by birth and by nature (to the Renaissance the terms were synonymous) he cannot discriminate good from bad. His love for Edmund is a trust that the bastard exploits, planting a false letter, which he backs up with false testimony, alleging that Edgar would wish to oust his father (whereas of course it is Edmund who would do that). It is a convention in Elizabethan drama that slander is always believed, which is to be explained perhaps from the necessities of the limited time available, or is perhaps a truth about life (how many of us instantly *dis*believe bad report?). But we are at liberty to form our own judgment of the person doing so. Lear is to be blamed for believing Goneril and Regan, yet since they were merely flattering his debased scale of values, in a test which he had himself devised, it is not surprising that he did so. But Gloucester believes Edmund instantly, in the absence of Edgar, and even engages the bastard son to spy on the other. As Edmund says, ending the scene as he had begun it, with a soliloquy, how lucky he is to have

> A credulous father, and a brother noble,
> Whose nature is so far from doing harms
> That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
> My practices ride easy! I see the business.
> Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:
> All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.
>
> (187 ff.)

The naked statement of self-seeking reminds us of Iago, as does the confidence with which he approaches the task ("easy": "For 'tis most easy / Th' inclining Desdemona to subdue / In any honest suit": II, iii, 332 ff.), and the scorn for those taken in by his traps ("Thus credulous fools are caught!": IV, i, 45). Shakespeare's villains have it too easy, one sometimes feels.

Edmund's predictions of the success of his plots are, like Iago's, accurate. The "credulous father" Gloucester is easily manipulated into setting a guard to catch Edgar (II, i, 17), and Edmund, who has been "sheltering" Edgar (that is, keeping him locked up, where he cannot confront his father), dupes him into fleeing, so that Gloucester can order him to be pursued and killed (56-63). The systematic inversion practiced by the hypocrite is brought out by Shakespeare, almost with an admiration for its trickery. Edmund reports to Gloucester how,

> When I dissuaded him from his intent,
> And found him pight to do it, with curst speech
> I threaten'd to discover him: he replied,
> "Thou unpossessing bastard! . . . though thou didst produce
> My very character—I'd turn it all
> To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice. . . ."
>
> (II, i, 64 ff.)

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Since it is all, in truth, Edmund's "suggestion, plot, and damned practice," the inversion is so apparent to us as to make him seem cheeky. Edmund displays throughout a relaxed, almost dapper manner, far removed from the obsessive Iago, eaten up by the suspicions in his own innards. Yet their deeds have the same perverted outcome. Gloucester exclaims "O strange and fast'ned villain! . . . I never got him" (77 f.), and promises to take the necessary legal steps to make Edmund capable of inheriting his patrimony, otherwise closed to a bastard:

> Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means
> To make thee capable.
>
> (84 f.)

Edmund now has Edgar's lands.

I earlier described the form of hypocrisy that Shakespeare was most interested in as dynamic, acting on its own behalf to achieve some definite goal. Yet in the tragedies these villains are never satisfied: Macbeth goes on killing like some automaton, Iago goes on destroying until he has brought everyone down. The principle of rapacious egoism, Shakespeare shows, does not let up once it has achieved its first-formulated goal. We see this from Edmund both as subject and object. As subject, acting for his own interests, the later confusion of events—with Cordelia returned from France with soldiers to seek her father and secret letters passing to and fro—suddenly puts Gloucester into a difficult position. He is loyal to Cornwall, but he is also loyal to Lear, and is outraged at the way he has been treated: "Most savage and unnatural," Edmund agrees (III, iii, 1 ff.). Telling Edmund of the letter, Gloucester makes him his trusted accomplice:

> We must incline to the King. I will look him and privily relieve him; go you and maintain talk with the Duke, that my charity be not of him perceiv'd.
>
> (III, iii, 14 ff.)

No sooner has he left than Edmund moves up to verse to show that he is *semper idem*:

> This courtesy, forbid thee, shall the Duke
> Instantly know; and of that letter too:
> This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me
> That which my father loses; no less than all;
> The younger rises when the old doth fall.
>
> (23 ff.)

Edmund shares Goneril and Regan's contempt for old age, but he goes beyond them even, in betraying his own father, knowing that the penalty for helping Lear may be death. Loathsome as he now is, he becomes still more so as he hypocritically professes his filial embarrassment to Cornwall:

> How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty,[17] something fears me to think of. . . . O Heavens! that this treason were not, or not I the detector!
>
> (III, v, 2 ff.)

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Yet when Cornwall pronounces him the new Earl of Gloucester, and orders him to seek his father out, Edmund has yet another layer of pretense at hand:

> *[Aside]* If I find him comforting the King, it will stuff his suspicion more fully. *[Aloud]* I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.
>
> (17 ff.)

Edmund's perversion of such words as "nature," "loyalty," and "blood" is grimly evident to us, but not to Cornwall (who may not understand those terms, in any case), who now puts himself into the position of an adopted father to Edmund: "I will lay trust upon thee; and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love" (24 f.). Knowing what Edmund has done to his real father might have given Cornwall pause before becoming the next one.

As subject, Edmund acts for himself, doing anything that will advance him: Goneril and Regan live by the same principle. When Edmund is sent off with Goneril (since, Cornwall tells him, "the revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding": III, vii, 6 ff.), he comes into the final stage of his career, moving from subject to object, first of Goneril's love, then of Regan's. Arriving home, Goneril pronounces herself his mistress, and promises him speedy advancement—which can only mean by the murder of her husband, Albany (IV, ii, 17 ff.). To her, as to Edmund, the question of legitimacy is a nuisance to be subverted:

> Oh! the difference of man and man.
> To thee a woman's services are due:
> My Fool usurps my body.
>
> (IV, ii, 26 ff.)

When Goneril's "trusty servant," Oswald, bears a letter from her to Edmund, Regan attempts to corrupt him into giving it to her (IV, v, 20 ff.). All trust has now been destroyed by these seemers. Having declared her desire for Edmund to Oswald (28 ff.), Regan declares it to the man himself (V, i, 6 ff.), as the egoism they each pursue turns the two sisters into deadly rivals (15 f., 18 f.). Left alone, Edmund is rather amused by the situation:

> To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
> Each jealous of the other, as the stung
> Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
> Both? one? or neither?
>
> (V, i, 55 ff.)

Rather like Iago, in a soliloquy at a similar stage of the action (*Othello*, V, i, 11-22), Edmund concludes that he will win anyway. But in fact he has already been exposed. Oswald, carrying Goneril's letter, and with the added instructions to kill Gloucester should he find him, tried to do so but was killed by Edgar, who discovered their secret plans to kill Albany (IV, vi, 227-280). Immediately before Edmund's soliloquy, Edgar, still in disguise, has given the letter to Albany (40-50), and for the first time the forces of good have a superior knowledge over the hypocrites. As a result, Albany can arrest Edmund after their victory in battle, and prevent Goneril's marriage plot (V, iii, 83 ff.). Then

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Edgar appears, disguised as a poor knight whose "name is lost; / By treason's tooth bare-gnawn, and canker-bit" (121 f.), and by defeating him in single combat, completes the exposure of Edmund, the bastard being displayed as a hypocrite and pretender (162-174), who in a fair contest—according to Renaissance optimism about the superiority of law—is bound to be defeated by the legitimate.

The destructive egoism represented by Goneril and Regan destroys itself: one poisons the other, and then kills herself. Goneril's letter declaring her desire to Edmund is the means by which the truth is finally revealed: again appetite destroys itself. Yet before it does so it destroys much else, and the devastation at the end of *King Lear* is a sufficient proof of the destructiveness of hypocrisy, once it is believed. Trusting hypocrites such as these is like offering oneself as a test-bed for the cultivation of some deadly bacillus. Once established, it will not be got rid of save at the cost of the organism on which it has bred; like Iago's "invention," it "plucks out brains and all."

* * *

Looking back over this chronicle of destruction we are struck by Shakespeare's revelation of the unsuspected depths of evil connected with hypocrisy. After Falstaff or Malvolio or Parolles, we might be tempted to think that dissimulation can be known, exposed or controlled, without much harm being done. But after Richard III we would have second thoughts; after Iago we might begin to doubt whether anyone could ever be trusted again. Not all the hypocrites are equally resourceful, but they all exploit positions of trust in order to gain at the expense of others. Goneril and Regan almost have hypocrisy thrust upon them, in that Lear's invitations to flatter for instant profit do impose an intolerable burden on anyone of a less than firm integrity. Yet once they have collaborated in this verbal insincerity they reveal an extent of human viciousness no one could have expected. Having shut Lear out in the storm, Goneril and Regan lay "a plot of death upon him" (III, vi, 92 ff.). In Shakespeare's tragedies hypocrisy is no mere quirk of human nature but the sign of a propensity toward deep and ultimately inexplicable evil. No one attempts to answer Lear's question,

> Is there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts?
> (III, vi, 78 f.)

because no one could answer it, then or now. Iago's exploitation of trust enables him to make Othello kill Desdemona: all that Othello can say at the end is

> Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil
> Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?
>
> (V, ii, 303 f.).

Iago refuses to answer that question, or indeed to speak again, thus putting himself outside human society forever. The hypocrite, presented in asides and soliloquies, is given the theatrical medium that suits exactly his isolation over

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and against his fellowmen. In Shakespeare, hypocrisy is linked inseparably with that rapacious egoism that is willing to destroy all in order to advance itself. We might attempt to complete La Rochefoucauld's maxim by saying that hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue, in order to destroy it.

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[2]T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), vol. 1, p. 1.

[3]For a fuller commentary on this scene, see Brian Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* (London, 1968), pp. 116 f.

[4]Montaigne, *Essais*, II, xviii, and cf. Plutarch *Lysand.*, c. 8; and Bacon, Essay "Of Truth": J. Spedding *et al.*, eds., *Works*, 14 vols. (London, 1857-1874), VI, p. 379.

[5]Compare also *The hypocrites unmasking. Or a cleare discovery of the grosse hypocrisy of the officers and agitators in the army. . . .*, by William Prynne (1647); *The hypocritical Christian; or The conventicling citizen displayed . . .* (1682); *The hypocritical Whigg displayed* (1682); *The hypocrite unmask'd; a comedy. . . .*, by W. Winstanley (New York, 1801); *The convict; or The Hypocrite unmasked. A Tale* by G. P. R. James (New York, 1847); etc.

[6]See Brian Vickers, "Francis Bacon's Use of Theatrical Imagery," in *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1971), pp. 189-226.

[7]S. T. Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, T. M. Raysor, ed., 2 vols. (London, 1960), I, 79.

[8]See Mario Praz, " 'The Political Brain': Machiavelli and the Elizabethans," in *The Flaming Heart* (New York, 1958), and N. Orsini, " 'Policy' or the Language of Elizabethan Machiavellianism," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 9 (1946), pp. 122-134. In " 'Policy,' Machiavellianism, and the Earlier Tudor Drama," *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 1 (1971), pp. 195-209, N. W. Bawcutt gives evidence of the pejorative associations of the word long before Machiavelli became known in England; thereafter, in the propaganda against him, it became inseparably attached.

[9]Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, ch. xviii; and *Discorsi, II*, xiii.

[10]See *I Henry VI*, IV, iv, 36, *III Henry VI*, IV, iv, 33, *Rape of Lucrece*, 1243.

[11]*Hamlet* could also be considered, but it seems to me an oddity among Shakespeare's mature plays, brilliant but incoherent. But it would be interesting to explore the two main deceptions practiced by Claudius, the murder of Hamlet senior, which the hero penetrates thanks to the Ghost's intervention, and his own murder, which he does not. Claudius's hypocrisy is sustained with great invention.

[12]See, for example, L. C. Knights, *Explorations* (London, 1946), and *Some Shakespearian Themes* (London, 1959); F. C. Kolbe, *Shakespeare's Way* (London, 1930), on the use of antithesis; and Cleanth Brooks, "The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness," in *The Well Wrought Urn* (New York, 1947), pp. 21-46. The edition of *Macbeth* by Kenneth Muir in the New Arden series remains the most useful.

[13]Andrew Marvell, "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," *Poems of Andrew Marvell*, H. Macdonald, ed. (London, 1952), p. 121.

[14]Gregory Bateson and J. Reusch, *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry* (New York, 1951), p. 179.

[15]Bacon, Essay "Of Discourse": *Works*, *ed. cit.*, VI, 456.

[16]La Rochefoucauld, *Les Maximes*, #306, C. Fitzgibbon, tr., *The Maxims of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld* (London, 1957).

[17]Edmund has perverted the meaning of "nature" and "loyalty," of course, so that his phrase becomes another instance of the destructive processes of egoism: compare his "gives way" with the words of the third servant after Gloucester's blinding: "If she live long, / And in the end meet the old course of death, / Women will all turn monsters" (III, vii, 100 ff.), and with Gloucester's prediction of discord: "love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide . . ." (I, ii, 115 ff.). It is the sense of the *process* of evil, the actual moments of change, transformation, or self-revelation, that give *King Lear* its unique quality. As Gloucester says, "Our flesh and blood is grown so vile, my lord / That it doth hate what gets it" (III, iv, 149 f.). Albany calls Goneril "Thou changed and self-cover'd thing" (IV, i, 62).

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Montaigne on Illusion: The Denunciation of Untruth

I

THE WORLD AROUND US is mere falsehood and treachery. "Dissimulation is one of the notablest qualities of this age."[1] "Deceit supporteth, yea, and nourisheth the greatest part of mens vacations."[2] Beneath a cloak of noble pretexts we scheme, and we kill.

Exalted by the Stoics, taken up again during the Middle Ages from the Christian perspective by John of Salisbury and Otto von Freising, then, later, by a host of others, the hoary theme of the world as stage is persistently, if unsystematically, developed by Montaigne. "All the world is a stage-playing" (Petronius).[3] Montaigne, as did many of his contemporaries, stressed the illusory effect of this drama: this game in which men play out their appointed roles, gesticulating, posturing, and declaiming like actors, is but shadow and vanity. The grandeur of princes is pure sham: artful imitation suffices to convey the idea of majesty and to inspire the respect of the people. "Yea the very maske of greatnesse, or habit of Majesty, represented in Tragedies, doth in some sort touch and beguile us."[4] The wisdom of the prudent and the doctrines of scholars are no less sham. All is lure, decoy, mummery, humbug. All is borrowed, all is *pour le masque et la montre*, vain ostentation, mottled inanity, cruel and futile show. Scanning the stage, the eye meets only triumphant deceivers and satisfied dupes. "Innocencie it selfe could not in these times nor negotiate without dissimulation, nor trafficke without lying."[5] Should we laugh or cry before this spectacle? "Most of our vacations are like playes."[6] But it is a farce in which men ravage, torture, and kill. The fires of stakes and flesh smoke everywhere. "Cast we our eyes about us, and in a general survay consider all the world; all is tottring, all is out of frame."[7]

The average man, without malice aforethought, lends himself to imposture: prisoner of his own fancy, forgetful of himself, he is caught up in the game. He knows neither the true nature of things nor his own true nature, for the evil spell of appearance enthralls him. The martial ardor of princes and the stale propaganda of religions make the most of this blindness, for they have need of credulous men who submit to domination by opinion, even at the cost of their lives —"Every opinion is of sufficient power to take hold of a man in respect of life."[8]

How did Montaigne discover this duplicity? Can a precise moment be discerned when disillusion enlightened him, like a bitter Grace or like the

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désabusement—the disenchantment, the *desengaño*—that suddenly restores sight to certain heroes in baroque theater? Religious tradition and secular morality have always taught that the world and its pageantry are but traps, that they dazzle us with their false glitter while true riches lie elsewhere. Indeed, one wonders whether pretense ever took Montaigne by surprise. The recognition of pretense is, like language, a skill learned early and effortlessly: one becomes aware of the universal cheating when one first looks at the world. Duplicity and cunning are not discoveries made late in life; they are the biases through which the world presents itself to the neophyte. Hypocrisy is not even a secret: all the world extols "this new found vertue of faining and dissimulation, which now is so much in credit."[9] The fakery of public officials and high society exposes itself by its very excess. Anyone who gets involved in public affairs is warned of it from the beginning, and in order not to stray from the generally observed rule, must straightaway resolve to be on guard and to protect himself. "Nowadaies, that is not the truth which is true, but that which is perswaded to others."[10] On that point, education is quickly acquired. Politics reveals itself from the start as craftiness, ruse, guile—quite legitimate defenses against the ambushes of enemies and the inconstancy of fortune. Thus deception is so little concealed that it appears to be universally accepted. There is no need for a sudden vision to disclose the presence of the mask and the duplicity. They are the common "form," the "manner" everyone adopts—tacit understanding erected into a general rule.

At the same time, in the futile chatter of garrulous humanity, it is not rare to hear deceptive appearances denounced. The protestation of sincerity, the refusal to flatter, the scorn of counsels of prudence—all have their consecrated formulae duly recorded in relevant treatises. All are part of the oratorical arsenal. Bold words are one weapon of persuasion among many. The rhetoric that opposes being and seeming is still one of the games in which everyone takes pleasure. Whoever wishes can, with the ample support of citations, bring to trial the universal comedy—but, for all that, he does not himself give up the stage. He takes on a final role, that of the sage, of the disillusioned elder, who sees with perspicacity the vices of his time and denounces them with vehemence. The code of dissimulation would remain imperfect if it did not foresee among its gestures the *refusal* to dissimulate. The enemy of masks is often only a supplementary character in the masked comedy: the spectacle becomes credible by the presence of a character who ostensibly refuses to believe in the appearances he encounters. The actor who defends himself against illusion takes on the role of a real being, according to the game of relative position. (The same is true of current ideology, one of whose best protective maneuvers is to attack "ideology.")[11]

Can we suspect Montaigne of playing that game? He is the first to suspect this of himself, and he rejects it with as much force as is possible for a man to reject the world in whose bosom he has lived and acted, and where he continues to do so.

To discern so acutely "the banishment of truth,"[12] Montaigne must have formulated for himself a rule of candor and veracity that the world never failed to disappoint. Would he speak so often of inconstancy and humbuggery if he did not have a standard of forthrightness and steadfastness, even if he knew that standard through a confused hope? Any accusation of the falsity of the world

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supposes the belief in the contrary possibility: a truth that would exist elsewhere (in this world or outside of it) and that would authorize us, in its name, to become the prosecutors of falsehood. By denouncing the glamour of *seeming*, Montaigne unequivocally sides with the fullness of true *being*, which he knows only by the force of the refusal that makes him hold the lies and the masks to be unacceptable. But Montaigne (at the instant he opposes the world) cannot yet claim to possess truth: he proclaims only his hatred of "feint." The "true" is the as yet unknown positive "x," implied by the negation of the festering evil; it does not have a fixed shape, for it is the unappeased energy that quickens and arms the act of refusal.

Opposition can at first only manifest itself in space; negation expresses itself metaphorically by the act of moving apart. Montaigne feels the need to reserve for himself *a place* removed from the world—a point from which he can view the life of men and where he can feel delivered from all compromisings. If the world is a theater of illusion, one's duty is to exit, to find a way of being *elsewhere*. To exile one's self from a world from which truth has been banished is not really to expatriate.

Secession thus becomes the first act of a new drama: it determines the site where Montaigne stops the deceitful game, sets a frontier, consecrates an escape. This site will not be an abstract point: with Montaigne, everything takes concrete shape. The separate place will be the "librairie"—a sovereign, protected place. We know that Montaigne will not make it his permanent residence: he will still give much of his time to public affairs and even to court life. But what is truly important for him is to have conquered the *possibility* of feeling at home in another sphere, of removing himself totally at any moment from the game. He has given contemplative distance its symbolic localization, reserved for it an ever-welcoming hearth, without having to live there always. Here, a rift separates him, the spectator, from human affairs: as he builds his haven of freedom, his eye bridges the gap. He watches the crowd as it voluntarily throws itself into slavery, sees the chains that bind others, and feels his own loosen and fall. The first stake is not knowledge—it is consciousness.

This taking possession of a *place*, the arrangement of a preserve, also mark a caesura in *time*. One has only to note the wording of the inscription Montaigne had painted on the wall of his library in 1571,[13] a year that marks a radical break in Montaigne's existence. A new era in his personal life begins. This moment should be linked to a fixed point of both collective time (*Anno Christi* 1571 . . . *pridie cal. mart.*) and of biographical time (*aet.* 38 . . . *die suo natali*). The birthday reinforces the idea of a voluntary *birth*. Time begins again and takes a new direction: it is now the time that remains to live (*quantillum in tandem superabit decursi multa jam plus parte spatii*), the few days that will be added to the already completed life. A new law and a new rule come into effect. Order is no longer founded on *servitium* but on *libertas*. A strict opposition sets an expression of disgust, a will to break (*servitii aulici et munerum publicorum pertaesus*) against the votive act that consecrates the place of retreat (*libertati suae, tranquillitatique, et otio consecravit*). This place will be the "bosom of the learned Muses" (*doctarum virginum sinus*), in obvious reference to the works of poetry, philosophy, and history that will surround him. For the modern reader, the notion of withdrawal, the image of the hidden place (*dulces latebras*), and the feminine figure of

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the Muses (later Montaigne tells us that he is not sure whether he wouldn't rather produce a child—"by the acquaintance of the Muses, than by the copulation of my wife")[14] evoke the psychoanalytic concept of regression, with its cortege of related notions. When Montaigne invokes serenity (*quietus*, then *tranquillitas*), security (*securus*), and rest (*otium*), this facile interpretation is seemingly confirmed. Nevertheless, for the sake of the psychoanalytic argument, one should note that, whereas the house is the ancestral home (*avitas sedes*) of the masculine line, *sedes* is feminine, as are most of the nouns contained in the list of terms consecrated by the inscription (only *otium* is neuter!). Notwithstanding, one should recognize, as Hugo Friedrich has well shown, that this is simply a restatement of the traditional formulae of *otium cum litteris*, that is, the contemplative variant of the humanist ideal, the mode urged when civic humanism had shown itself impracticable and strewn with perils.[15] (Montaigne, who knew perfectly well how to acquit himself of his political tasks, proves that the two modes can alternate.) The inaugural inscription must not be read as primarily a psychological document, for it conforms to an impersonal (or transpersonal) paradigm. However, one can argue that by exalting antiquity as source and nutritive sap, by justifying solitary life and retreat into one's self (*sibi vivere*), the humanist tradition put the expressive forms into which could flow anguish, nostalgia, and the need for security at the disposition of individual desire. The libidinal uses of this impersonal language can be surmised.

The inscription in which Montaigne dedicates his "librairie" to freedom and tranquility is matched by a second inscription (the text of which is less easily decipherable), which dedicated it to the memory of a lost friend, La Boétie. The funerary consecration is appended to the self-consecration: the library Montaigne intends to enjoy includes the books of the vanished companion. The tranquility he longs to savor during the second half of his life perpetuates the dialogue with his favorite friend. The stay in the "librairie" is thus twice bounded by death: that which Montaigne himself awaits and that of which he is the survivor. For both, the notion of identity plays a principal role. With respect to La Boétie, Montaigne feels himself responsible for an image, a likeness. For this reason he took charge of editing his works (1570-71), thereby solemnly undertaking to conserve and transmit, entire and intact, the countenance of the admirable companion, such as he had been in life. The rule of identity dictates that one must lose nothing, alter nothing, that one must doggedly resist the pull of death toward dissipation and oblivion. With respect to his own life, by assuring it rest, liberty, leisure, tranquility, and security, Montaigne resolves to deliver it from "mutation," from dependence, from the ceremony to which public life condemns those who belong to it. For him, the time to live in communion with one's self without losing one's self, ever faithful to one's nature, ever faithful to Nature, is *now*.

II

The choice (crisis) to which the retreat of 1571 gives a decisive response is thus a choice of *identity*. Montaigne elects a life stabilized in its relation to the self and opposed to the world and its theater of illusion.

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It is customary to think of the first chapters (written between 1572 and 1574) as impersonal texts, while the later texts mark the entrance on stage of the "me" and the concern for self-description. One should recognize, however, that the self-portraiture is but the further elaboration of a thought that was from the outset oriented toward personal life. The question of the self is posed from the very beginning: Montaigne tried at first to answer it by traditional methods, and it is because these methods did not satisfy his expectations that he had recourse to another approach, another strategy.

The texts of the first period leave ample traces of Montaigne's sensitivity to philosophic arguments that teach the return to, and repossession of, the self. He repeats these arguments to himself, he paraphrases them, he reiterates them with variations, and, elsewhere, up until the end of his life, he will remain attached to them.

If one reads, among others, the chapter "*De la Solitude*" (I, 39), one finds that what Montaigne is searching for is a position in this world that is really his. In this he differs from other men who, succumbing to imagination, presumption, and vanity, try to occupy or anticipate ranks and stations that are not theirs. Their thoughts always wander elsewhere—"Other men goe ever else-where."[16] "Who doth not willingly chop and counter-change his health, his ease, yea, and his life for glorie, and for reputation? The most unprofitable, vaine, and counterfet coine, that is in use with us."[17]—To do so is to live outside the self. This appetite for leaving one's true place, this need to assert one's self, result in the eternal masquerade of human tragicomedy. Man confers on the fears or desires of his own imaging a supereminent reality: the elsewhere becomes for him closer, more real, more important than the *here*. Thus he assumes the look and the garb that seem to bring him closest to the chimera. Such is the inevitable progression that transforms man from a being fooled by his imagination into a false, masked being. Having bestowed false faces upon all things, he can in turn only confront them with a grimace or a mask. Making his own life depend on what others think of him, he is less hypocritical than *estranged*. Rousseau will not frame his first indictment more compellingly.

Here is the universal error that Montaigne, like Seneca before him, denounces, and which he is determined to avoid: "My profession, which is, wholly to settle and containe me in my selfe. . . ."[18] He vows to resist the lure that always tempts us to think *ailleurs*—"We ever think on somewhat else."[19] And again, "It is here, with us, and no where else, that the soules powers and effects, are to be considered."[20] And, "We should reserve a store-house for our selves, what need soever chance; altogether ours, and wholly free, wherein we may hoard up and establish our true liberty, and principal retreit and solitarinesse, wherein we must go alone to our selves, take our ordinarie entertainment."[21] To think *here* will mean to do one's best not to trespass the conscience's actual self-awareness, to resist every threat to one's identity, and to concentrate on the powers that one regains in this conversion to one's self.

Good teaching and sound ethical choice respond unequivocally to a series of alternatives, all of which pit focusing the self against its dispersion: between *being* and *seeming*, *here* and *there*, *me* and *others*, *mine* and *not-mine*, the *natural* and the *artificial*, the *spontaneous* and the *learned*, the *interior* and the *exterior*, the

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profound and the *superficial*, there is no real choice. Each of these antitheses contains or echoes all the others. They are both interchangeable and superimposable. They permit neither suspense nor hesitation: the decision is made in advance. All designate one course of action—the return to the self, the resumption of autonomy and autarchy.

What does the ancient lesson of philosophic diatribe tell us? That man, by submitting to outside forces, squanders himself to no purpose; that he is blind passion and passivity; that he pursues only illusory pleasures; that, as a result, his substance dissipates and his will wears thin and becomes servile. But to the extent that he reenters the self, that he withdraws into his own inner fortress, everything crystallizes and becomes precious. Health returns, and he finds himself lively and alert. His native vigor is, at last, revived. Relieved of all that is not himself, man can enjoy and possess his true force. He coincides with himself. He forbids his energies to launch themselves toward chimerical futures or any external object. No seepage of the substance "me" is allowed. His actions are such that they find their point of application as close to himself as possible. Ultimately, the perfect action will consist of pure self-reflection, of nothing more than the reinforcement of an identity. Feeding back upon itself, the action does not leave the *here* and the *now*, but rather completes them, reinforces them, confers upon them a maximum of intensity and plenitude. *Now*, *here*—this instant and this place are henceforth contained and preserved in the decision to be one's self and belong only to one's self. Time and space, instead of being suffered as destructive forces, will be products of the interior will power that affirms the *here* and *now*, in a perpetual initial instant. Thus can conscience hope never more to be distracted from the self. Conscience has become an energy that perpetuates itself from instant to instant, aiming always at itself, seeking to invest itself only within the borders of the self, spurning the flattering appeals of the external world. One must be eternally vigilant, perpetually suspicious, forever inaccessible to the seductions that distract or subtract from the forces necessary for self-mastery and self-defense. Suspicion will not spare the subject himself. Solitude does not deliver *him* of vices, weaknesses, "concupiscences": "It is not enough, for a man to have sequestred himselfe from the concourse of people: it is not sufficient to shift place, a man must also sever himselfe from the popular conditions, that are in us. A man must sequester and recover himselfe from himselfe."[22]

Interpreters of Montaigne have generally perceived how this return to the self, inspired by the wisdom of antiquity, differs from what Christian piety and, above all, Augustinian teaching enjoin. To return to the self in order to listen to the voice of God and submit to his judgment is a rigorous demand; it differs radically from the inward glance that seeks in the self merely an interlocutory mirror and that aims to give to the mortal individual the full exercise of his own judgment. If both the humanist and the religious injunctions preach *reappropriation*, it is from the perspective of the believer only the first step toward submission to transcendent authority and the hope of salvation. For the humanist, reappropriation, once successful, is a satisfactory goal in itself.

Montaigne well knows that his choice is not that of spiritual vocation. Yet he anticipates the charge of "sinful self-complacency" that will be leveled in the next century by the men of Port Royal and, later, Malebranche. Indeed, some-

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times he goes so far as to accuse himself of weakness and to pay homage to those who are capable of true devotion. "They propose God as an object infinit in goodnesse, and incomprehensible in power, unto themselves. . . . And he that can enlighten his soule with the flame of a lively faith and hope, really and constantly, in his solitarinesse, doth build unto himselfe a voluptuous and delicious life, far surmounting all other lives."[23] At the same time Montaigne declares the denial of the body and the categorical break with the realities of the world to be beyond his reach: "The wiser sort of men, having a strong and vigorous mind, may frame unto themselves an altogether spirituall life. But mine being common, I must help to uphold my selfe by corporall commodities."[24] He will sometimes be quite severe with those who push their scorn for the world so far as to completely cut themselves off from their bodies (*se désassocier du corps*): "They will be exempted from them and escape man. It is meere folly, insteade of transforming themselves into Angels, they transchange themselves into beastes: in lieu of advancing, they abase themselves. Such transcending humours affright me as much, as steepy, high and inaccessible places."[25] This is to betray the unity of reconstituted existence, to submit again to the maleficence of exteriority by putting one's self *hors de soi*. Montaigne saves his sharpest disapprobation for those who, having severed themselves from the world, turn back against it in order to change it, to subjugate it more utterly to the will of God—of which they pretend to be extremely well informed. To Montaigne, they are themselves but witless Thespians, the first victims of the new canon they would impose.

If Montaigne chooses *inner* identity, the equal and stable relation of the self to the self, he does so without taking his eyes off the world, and by preserving the ties that do not impede belonging to one's self. He is willing to remain in close touch with the world, as long as enjoying the material world is compatible with the refusal of servitude to it. According to Montaigne, the fullest personal existence includes the life of the body, and the body is a "piece" of the world, a part of nature.

Reverting to a few of the great themes of ancient moral science, Montaigne resuscitates arguments that, in the name of the fullest truth, favor both commitment to, and withdrawal from, the world. When it comes to choosing between the solidity of *actions* and the futility of *words*, Montaigne accepts the lesson of traditional morality, that is, he opts for action. Here his *préjugé nobiliaire* (Friedrich)[26] is unmistakably at work. A well-born gentleman is perforce reluctant to give precedence to language, eloquence, and the seductions of artful speech.[27] But when it is a question of contrasting the *outside* and the *inside*, according to another antithesis suggested by the same traditional system of ethics, he claims to be diffident of action, because action projects us into the treacherous region beyond the limits of the self. We have just quoted his opinion of those who claim to reform dogmas and civil laws in the name of a truth they think they possess.

The only activity that is not deceitful is that in which the individual acts without forsaking himself, that by which he enters the role of the judge, casting his eyes on the world, or on himself—ultimately, that in which the ego is simultaneously genetic principle and supreme purpose. Such activity is expressed in the reflexive verbs *s'essayer* (to examine one's self), *s'examiner* (to test one's self), *se*

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peindre (to depict one's self). Words and actions will, in the end, reclaim their validity, but solely in the context of self-consciousness and reflective action.

Identity, however, such as it will be presented to us in this *portrait*, is not of the same nature as the identity Montaigne had initially pursued in the form of a calm and constant equality of the self to the self. Let us now retrace the path taken by Montaigne from one definition of identity to the other.

Looking from afar at the world, settling for that purpose on a quiet and *consecrated* place, Montaigne adopts the attitude that the ancients called *theoria*, or theoretical existence. Indeed (though in an addition dated after 1588), he presents one of the classic arguments justifying the practice of *theoria:*

> Our life (said Pithagoras) draws neare unto the great and populous assemblies of the Olympike games, wherein some, to get the glorie, and to win the goale of the games, exercise their bodies with all industrie; others, for greedinesse of gaine, bring thither marchandise to sell: others there are (and those be not the worst) that seek after no other good, but to marke how, wherefore, and to what end, all things are done: and to be spectators or observers of other mens lives and actions that so they may the better judge and direct their owne.[28]

Puzzled by the variety of human activities, the spectator tries to go back to causes: he applies himself to understanding, in a comprehensive view, the *how* and the *why* of the whole. This external truth must almost immediately find its internal application, both in the intellectual act of judgment (which is also a form of vision, though directed inward) and in the voluntary action by which the individual rules his life. The inquiry, actively pursued through the labyrinth of the real, attempts to arrive at uniform laws. The latter, having not only the value of causal laws, but also possessing in equal measure the quality of examples (positive or negative), find their practical extension in the personal everyday life, to the extent that they make possible its harmonious unification. Thus a truth perceived outside of the self should have the power to be imitated and relived identically inside. Its efficacy is translated into identity with the self, that is to say, into the constancy and the virtuous uniformity of our style of life. Clearly, once the truth is grasped by the *theoria*, it can only be reiterated, identical with itself and ever demanding the identity and stability of the subject that possesses it. The spectator relates to exemplary existences by endeavoring to be like them. In this effort, to insure perpetual fidelity to these models of constancy, he strives to be at one with himself. To satisfy this requirement, the recall of the example, admittedly, suffices: the impersonal literature of the *Leçons* will be effective only on condition that the reader renounce neither judgment nor personal effort. Memory offers to our sight the evidence that urges us to repeat it: "Until such time as you have framed your selfe such, that you dare not halt before your selfe, and that you shall be ashamed of, and beare a kind of respect unto your selfe . . . present Cato, Phocion, and Aristides unto your imagination, in whose presence even fooles would hide their faults, and establish them controulers of all your intentions."[29] We must look to exemplary individuals in order to imagine their eyes directed toward us. Under the control of these beings, with whom for the moment we identify ourselves, we are thrown back on our own truth and to the act of self-affirmation that constitutes our personal identity.

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This closed circuit of external exemplarity and internal regularity will soon appear unrealizable to Montaigne. He will soon have discovered that the examples contradict each other; that the law of human action is not univocal (since identical effects can have diverse causes, or, according to the circumstances, the same behavior can produce diametrically opposite consequences); that, in the light of an unexpected event, the paradigmatic quality conferred on virtuous heroes can be brought into question. "Every example limpeth,"[30] Montaigne will finally say—after having enjoined us not to limp (*clocher*) before exemplary men. More profoundly and decisively, Montaigne, by generalizing the requirement for an undisturbed contemplative gaze, was brought to the discovery that it was incompatible with the demand for unity, rest, and equality with the self, that is, with the notion of identity in its original sense.

In effect, the individual has not only to take a distant look at the life of the world, but has to split himself in order to become a theater in his own right. According to an injunction formulated by Seneca (but stressed by Montaigne): "You and another are a sufficient theater one for another; or to your selfe alone."[31] Although initiated in the hope of obtaining the *unity* to be realized when the spectator-me will be able to give his full approval to the spectacle-me, the schism implicit in the act of self-observation introduces an irretrievable duality. In Montaigne's own experience, the auto-contemplative schism, instead of being self-regulating, initiates a process of rapid pluralization. The decomposition sets in motion an infinite regression. Multiple and limitless changes swarm in the space that extends itself before the observer's gaze. The stage that the "me" is to itself is invaded by a horde of unstable and mutable figures. Montaigne confesses that he has no power, except to witness the change going on in himself. The task of mastering it is hopeless. Repose, so sincerely desired, can no longer be attained, and *being* once again slips away.

III

As has already been indicated, the failure of the self-regulatory enterprise leads to the reinforcement of the role of observer. If tranquil converse with one's self appears unrealizable, there is yet the possibility of contemplating *l'ineptie et l'estrangeté* of the monsters *en rolle* (registered), that is to say, captured by writing. Faced with an internal other—the observed-me—henceforth permanently installed, an ever-vigilant eye strains to assure the only possible continuity, since the complete equality of the self to the self is no longer attainable by virtue of the will. This eye is not without its effect on the "spectacle-me." It is not altogether stripped of power. We are, however, far from the organizational effectiveness at first hoped for. The rift is irreparable. There will never be coincidence or tranquil identity of the observer-me and the observed-me.

The sole recourse for those who yet value unity is to translate the latter—the observed-me—into the discourse of change: discourse that no longer has for its objective moral stability, but rather the quest for the causes of failure, for the reasons that make repose impossible, for the inventory of obstacles that, by degrees, caused the mirage of transparent, univocal, simple wisdom to recede. The book is the unitary place where the gathering of the many can be accomplished. Writing is compatible with the changeableness of moods, the multiplic-

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ity of contradictory thoughts, with growth, movement, travel. This works to the benefit of an ulterior synthesis brought about by reading, by Montaigne or his reader. Hence, phrases such as this one: "My book is alwaies one," followed at a short distance by the declaration, "My selfe now, and my selfe anon, are indeed two."[32]

We must now assay the significance of the transference of the unity-quest to the book. The first hope of Montaigne, as we have already seen, had been to perform the ethical task of constancy and virtuous reaffirmation of the self, in conformity with a putative rule or set of examples held to be definitive. Books were a crucial part of this pursuit: but they were the books of others, the master books containing the precepts to be followed, the historical paragons and archetypes begging imitation. Access to internal truth, had it been possible, would have been gained through intimate converse and the experience of reading. As virtue excludes the pursuit of glory and concern for posterity, Montaigne's assent to his own truth and virtuous identity would have been mute before the perfectly internal, private effulgence. The recourse to writing transforms the initial experience of a reader into the experience of an author. Simultaneously, it entails the transformation of naïve, credulous reading into critical reading, by which texts are no longer exploited with a view to reiterative identification but to new ends determined by *the* book *qua* craft.

The book, now the seat of identity, confers a new meaning on that concept. Identity ceases to be a permanent *essence* extracted from the realm of appearance and illusion, cultivated as the only value worthy of trust. Instead, it is a *relation* that attests to the closeness of the image to the model, as the agent is himself the author of the image. In other words, identity thus conceived includes and reabsorbs the difference. In effect, the difference is twofold: first, because the "me," despite the judicative glance it casts upon itself, never stops dissembling; second, because the book and life, as close and similar as one desires them to be, constitute distinct, ineluctably discordant levels of existence. The abyss can only be spanned by the eyes of the now indispensable witness. It is *through* him and *for* him that the resemblance of life to the book can be guaranteed.

The "me," to the degree that it undertakes to show itself, is also double: it comprises the eye of the observer, always synchronized with the act of writing, *and* the multiplicity of unstable feelings and shifting moods that the text records or relates. The reader is not simply beckoned to catch an unwonted glimpse of the diverse states of a subtly reworked self-portrait. The painter presents himself by the repeated act of painting himself, and the viewer must pass judgment on several levels of imitation and expression.

Such a likeness brings an aesthetic exigency into play. Although the art vocabulary used by Montaigne—*peindre*, *portrait*, *couleurs*—is metaphorical, it has a profound and revealing value. Identity is entrusted to the written work, to the book, to literature. Montaigne's venture, embarked on as a personal resolution with a purely moral purpose, will, without losing sight of this first purpose, become a *literary* masterpiece. The resort to writing, then to the self-portrait, should not be considered stages of a progressive discovery of self. The latter was, as we have seen, the object of attention and dominant interest from the very beginning. What occurs is the progressive transference of the responsibility of fixing that identity to writing, to the book, to the painted image. What was

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a moral task becomes an artistic one. This not only introduces the theme of failure of the moral quest for stability—it also salvages alienation, dissimilarity, and mutability for a synthesis from which the image of a unique individual will materialize out of the multitude of its *conditions et humeurs*. By requiring communication with, and the consent of, a witness (the reader, the observer of the portrait), the new aesthetic exigency tends toward the foundation of a new ethics: an ethics of veracity in representation, based on submitting the copy to the view of others. The conclusion to be drawn would seem to be that whenever the demand for identity is strong enough, it inevitably results in the renewal of ethical rules.

This duty of fidelity to one's self entails the mediation of others. Previously, the compulsion to probity and integrity required an extrinsic intervention: that of example and precept, endowed with sovereign authority, that the individual was supposed to internalize by obeying to the letter. Now the landscape is utterly new: the aesthetic concept of likeness takes the place left empty by the decline of traditional authority (that is, of Christianity as well as that of the Stoics). Henceforth, the sole surviving criterion is the success, stroke for stroke, of the "portraict" in the eyes of the witness and, above all, in the eyes of the writer himself, the first witness of his own mutable existence. Relations with others no longer involve a peril, a loss of self. Nor are they superfluous: they are the inescapable passageways through which identity reveals and manifests itself. Little matter if the book does not find actual readers; that it was conceived *pour autruy* is enough. Montaigne now receives his identity directly from the book.

Thus, paradoxically, order, stability, and integrity can be the products of self-directed activity that has at first no intention other than to *record* an existence in accordance with the aesthetic postulate of likeness. What Montaigne was unable to attain by seeking to regulate his life, by strictly subjecting it to normative example, he will achieve, without having sought to do more than faithfully represent himself in the manner of the sculptor or painter:

> And if it happen no man read me, have I lost my time, to have entertained my selfe so many idle houres, about so pleasing and profitable thoughts? In framing this poutraite by my selfe, I have so often been faine to frizle and trimme me, that so I might the better extract my selfe, that the patterne is thereby confirmed, and in some sort formed. Drawing my selfe for others, I have drawn my selfe with purer and better colours, than were my first. I have no more made my booke, then my booke hath made me. A booke consubstantiall to his Author: Of a peculiar and fit occupation. A member of my life. Not of an occupation and end, strange and forraine, as all other bookes. Have I mis-spent my time, to have taken an account of my selfe so continually and so curiously?[33]

IV

The lesson to be drawn from such an analysis is manifold. We see an enemy of appearance (masquerade) resort to fiction (to "form" himself) and to representation (to portray himself "for others"). The adventure that began with the dismissal of seeming ends with the triumph of seeming. There is no inconsistency. A simple explanation is easy to find and applies equally well to thinkers closer to us than Montaigne. The initial attack against deceptive appearance is at first

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sparked by the hope of apprehending underlying reality. But if reality eludes the grasp, if the doctrine of the skeptics prevails, then our only riches must lie in this world of appearances. Their value remains questionable; but as there is no legal currency, they are not quite counterfeit. Skepticism, as we all know, leads straight to phenomenalism.

Appearance, thus resurrected, has a new qualification. We have seen that, in the place of an ontological legitimation, appearance received an aesthetic justification: as a substitute for the true essence that evades it, it can, if we lend a hand, offer a system of harmonious and gratifying relations. Happiness itself is possible, provided one recognizes in advance that one must not hope for more than the spectacle exposed to our imperfect senses.

For Montaigne, the same is true of the political order. In the eyes of an "unmasking" critic, no institution is based on absolute justice—only on custom and convention. There is no best choice, no absolute norm. We are forced to revert to custom and convention *recognized as such*. Montaigne's conservatism (like Pascal's later on) accepts the established order not because it is more just in itself, but because it is generally more capable of assuring public peace—the most precious of all worldly goods. Here again, the convention that serves as a rallying point ultimately bears no resemblance to the convention that had initially been the object of defiant protest. What had been rejected was the *dogmatic* (usually theological) basis of the appeal of convention. What is finally accepted is an entirely pragmatic arrangement that does not pretend to be the expression of more than the most general agreement on what *seems* best to serve the common interest. If there are no more occult essences, then there is no longer an occult power behind them. As soon as nothing stronger than itself can oppose it, appearance ceases to evoke suspicion. Henceforth, the standard of the political and moral world is no longer conformity to some hidden norm but the open success of the apparent relations individuals establish among each other.

V

The distance between Montaigne's skepticism and certain currents in the literature of our own time—the philosophy of the absurd, of demystification, the criticism of "ideologies"—may seem considerable. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the trajectory traced so clearly in Montaigne—from protest against, to acceptance of, appearance—is being followed again in surprising ways, at least within a particular class of intellectuals interested in the practice of total criticism.

I will try to define in very general terms the experiment proposed by works of quite divergent perspectives. Each merits a separate analysis, but the search for a common denominator can prove fruitful—if it does not degenerate into a reductive maneuver.

At first, accepted values and traditional institutions are denounced as illusory. They are the products of a "linguistic contract" that conceals its arbitrary character. Common discourse is accused of being falsely rational, falsely universal: it merely veils the presence of unconscious desire and the tyrannical preponderance of individual interests.

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"Official" discourse is reproached for being without a referent in psychic or social reality. It is interpreted as a symptom of the disease of disguising troublesome reality: the universe of desire, the "class struggle," or, for others, the radical meaninglessness of existence. The accusation goes further. Since the age of the Romantics, many modern literary works have, so to speak, practiced what they preached, and in so doing, revealed their denunciatory intention by overplaying the abuse denounced. The tactic of irony was a favorite of the Romantics. They followed the code accepted by the commonality, only to drive its stipulations to the point where it destroys itself by excess. They revealed ubiquitous imposture by an exaggeration that rendered it suddenly perceptible and unacceptable. They sought to destroy illusion while feigning to be its accomplice. Deliberate illusionism is the weapon that shatters the illusion unaware of itself. Already, in *Measure for Measure*, the Duke puts on a mask, in order to discover the malevolent hypocrisy of Angelo (called to replace him as head of state). Such is the tactic adopted by certain "indirect methods" (Kierkegaard). Through the mask, or the pseudonym ostensibly assumed, men are told they have themselves deserted their veritable identity. In order to compel his parishioners to recognize their hidden sin, Reverend Hooper (in Hawthorne's *The Minister's Black Veil*) covers his face with a black crape that he will never again lay aside. (Hawthorne strongly hints that his hero, the masked unmasker, by attempting to coerce his fellow-villagers into the confession of their secret flaw, condemns himself to solitude and fails to recognize the true redemptive power—love.) In many cases, unmasking irony confines itself to negation. This is particularly the case with Dadaism, a late occurrence of romantic irony. The embittered conscience affirms itself free from the beliefs and conventions whose illusory character it has disclosed and now ridicules. But is this freedom itself free from attack? What can it respond to the criticism—for example, Hegel's —that rebukes romantic irony for being an illusory freedom, a vapor that dissipates into the void? By confining itself to an indefinite refusal, this liberty will never attain a concrete content. It will be freedom for nothing—unfreedom.

Often, in order to provide content for his freedom, the enemy of masks and "alienations" falls back on a code as arbitrary as that which he had at first attacked. The new code differs from the first only in that it admits to being the product of a choice and a construction. It does not claim transcendent origins and does not attempt to pass for the language of truth. It proclaims itself artifice. Thus the enemy of hypocrisy turns apologist of makeup (Baudelaire), of labored style (Flaubert), of the arbitrary constraint consciously accepted (Valéry), of the gratuitous act (Gide). As to those who rebel against the apparent benevolence of death-ridden Nature, what more can they do than passionately love that same mortal nature and its surface joys? There is no alternative, no substitute that surpasses them, simply because there is nothing deeper than the surface of the world (Camus). For lack of a higher truth with which to replace the fragile code of custom, one must revert to this same code, or at least, with an enhanced consciousness, to some coherent system that will be no more than one code among others. This movement of return to appearances can be accomplished modestly and undramatically by the acknowledgment of relativity and by the pragmatic acceptance, in the interest of all concerned, of that which,

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without prestige or deceit, can contribute to their pleasure. It can also be done more pathetically. The works of Nietzsche and his recent disciples come to mind. This course consists of conferring, by an act of *my* will, a higher value on that system of values of which *I* am the source, and to which no transcendent absolute can be opposed. Against a background of nothingness, power and force thus compel recognition as the sole appearance that is not illusion. The aesthetic option veers into a sort of activism: it chooses action for the sake of action, instead of abiding by the choice of convention for the sake of convention.

VI

It is now essential to draw a distinction that we should perhaps have introduced earlier. Montaigne reconciled himself with both the world of phenomena and with "custom." But these are far from being the same thing. Let us then consider each of these two points in their specific character and consequences.

Montaigne reconciles himself with the *phenomenal* world. He had declared it fallacious and unstable; but as true and stable being is unattainable, consciousness finally agrees to surrender itself, with full lucidity, to the incessant flux offered us by the life of the senses. Happiness awaits us there. Montaigne's successors, however, will not be satisfied by this solution, which brings the mind back to its point of departure—punished for its audacity but recompensed by the more acute attention that it henceforth pays to its natural condition. Starting with the same initial doubt, they will remove the "idols," review the whole body of science starting from the *tabulae rasae*, and with astonishing success, set down, in mathematical terms, the laws that govern the physical world. The development of the language of modern science will, from then on, be accompanied by an incessant polemic against the illusions of sensory perception and immediate imagination.

The world of phenomena, challenged by science, is demoted in the epistemological order to the level of illusion; but it cannot be expelled from human experience, of which it is the first "given." It is then taken over, in the most explicit fashion, by a new discipline, *aesthetics*, that, beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, clearly defines its status and its goals. The sensory approach to the world receives a new justification, and becomes the object of an experience that knows itself to be, and wants to be, different from scientific knowledge. It is thus that the world has grown accustomed to the coexistence of two languages that do not aspire to rival each other: that of science, which calculates and advances by contesting "illusions"; and that of art, which gives itself the task of collecting and organizing the most diverse, and sometimes the most aberrant products of the ingenuous exercise of our sensibility (Joachim Ritter).

Montaigne reconciles himself to *custom*. He executes the same reversionary movement in the ethical as in the ontological domain. Indeed, he had almost confounded the indictment of our pretension to penetrate the secrets of the natural world and the indictment of our complacency toward the fakery of the moral world. The malice of men and their refusal to bow before the mystery of nature are two aspects of the same limitation, of the same infirmity. Because we are limited creatures, nature is veiled, and we must hide our vices behind the

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mask of virtue. The same *ethical* condemnation encompasses the ambitions of knowledge and the unbridled lust to gratify our desires and to dominate others. For Montaigne, the aesthetic domain (the expression of self, the portrait) will be the site of a double reconciliation, the point where, after their common failure, the ontological and moral quests converge.

The philosophers and the scholars of the seventeenth century developed scientific discourse in the space that opened itself to mathematics beyond the phenomenal world. From then on a new ambition dawned: to discover the vices hidden under the mask of virtue with the same method and the same rigor that permit the formulation of numerical laws governing matter, beneath the appearances of the senses; to apply to "mind" the same logically conclusive reasoning that seems to have victoriously proved its efficacity with respect to "body" (Descartes). Henceforth, ontological and ethical demystification tend to meet in the domain of *knowledge* rather than aesthetics. This time, however, the encounter does not occur in a setting of retreat and renunciation but in one of triumphant conquest. The aim of justifying *custom* has been definitively abandoned.

At the dawn of modern science, the temptation to unveil in the "moral world" laws as rigorous as those that the science of mechanics could experimentally verify for the physical world was, in the exaltation of the first successes, very great. A principle as neutral, general, and predictable as that of force or attraction in mechanics had to be found and established for the behavior of men and societies. Specifically, moral terms such as "corruption," "sin," and "hypocrisy" had to be recognized as illusory concepts, as vestiges of the theological age, a kind of second mask. Behind this mask a primal substance or agent had to be uncovered. Depending on the doctrine, this agent was called "interest," "desire," "need," "psychic energy." We know this was the ambition of Enlightenment philosophers who strained their wits to the breaking point in the effort to construct a mechanics of the feelings and passions on the approximate model of the mechanics of solids and fluids. The nineteenth century saw the extension of this endeavor to history and society. These were made explicable by a game of "real forces"—unconscious for the historical actors themselves and unknown to historians. A "physiology" of societies strove not merely to rival the natural sciences but to effect union with them by grafting doctrines of social progress onto biological theories of evolution.

Here, illusion, unbeknownst to those who believed they had overcome it, made its most triumphant reentry. While the law of mathematical physics is subject to experimental testing and technical application, the same is not true of moral or historical "reality" that the enemy of masks claimed to read beneath the appearances that he had declared false.

Let us be as brief as possible without unwarranted simplification. In the domain of moral and historical reality, the interpretation of phenomena has scarcely any proof to allege save its own power of persuasion—its ability to transform society by means of the credit individuals accord it and the belief it has aroused in them. In the pursuit of this efficacity—in which no holds are barred—the cast of masked men and beliefs, of which the "unmasker" had thought himself the enemy, makes its reappearance on stage. What had been denied (or repressed) thus returns not in a parallel sphere (aesthetics), but actually within the very discourse that claims to have access to the real forces, to

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install the moral or social order that corresponds to them. One example out of a hundred: the fate of "ideology" between the moment when Marx denounced it as mask—the "spiritual point of honor of bourgeois society"—and the moment when Lenin affirmed that the yet to be born proletarian consciousness had to be mediated by an "ideology" for which the party was responsible. There is no question here, as there was with Montaigne, of an open reconciliation with appearance and custom, but rather of an unsuspected return of the act of faith—despite the denunciation of alienation and the belief that certainty had been reached in the realm of social knowledge. The supreme illusion, then, was to believe that one had escaped illusion.

This does not mean that illusion (or hypocrisy) is ineffective, but its success in history does not accord it the status of scientific truth. What it does prove is the rallying power among men of the illusory conviction of having escaped illusion. Montaigne knew it already: "Every opinion is of sufficient power to take hold of a man in respect of life." We have almost returned to our point of departure.

Translated by John Muresianu

References

An expanded version of the first part of this essay will appear (in French) in a forthcoming volume of the *Poetik und Hermeneulik* series published in Germany (Fink Verlag).

All quotations from Montaigne are taken from *Essays by Michel Lord of Montaigne*, Introduction by A. R. Waller, M.A., translated by John Florio, 3 vols., Everyman's Library (No. 440).

[1]II, xviii, t. II, p. 393.

[2]III, i, t., III, p. 14. *Vacations* here and in Reference 6 has the meaning occupation.

[3]III, x, t, III, p. 262. Petronius. The source, Petronius, is not mentioned by Montaigne but introduced by Florio.

[4]III, viii, t. III, p. 173.

[5]III, i, t. III, p. 13.

[6]III, x, t. III, p. 262.

[7]III, ix, t. III, p. 202.

[8]I, xi (in the French ed. I, xiv), t. I, p. 272.

[9]II, xvii, t. II, p. 373.

[10]II, xvii, t. II, p. 393.

[11]Henri Gouhier opportunely recalls: "It is always within an ideology that ideologies are discredited." See "L'idéologie et les idéologies," in *Démythisation et idéologies* (Aubier, Paris: Edited by E. Castelli, 1973), p. 89.

[12]II, xviii, t. II, p. 393.

[13]From Montaigne, *Les Essais*, Edited by Pierre Villey (Guilde du Livre, Lausanne: 1965), p. 34. *An. Chr[isti 1571] aet. 38, pridie cal. mart., die suo natali, Mich. Montanus, servitii aulici et munerum publicorum jamdudum pertaesus, dum se integer in doctarum virginum recessit sinus, ubi quietus et omnium securus [quan] tillum in tandem superabit decursi multa jam plus parte spatii; si modo fata duint exigat istas sedes et dulces latebras, avitasque, libertati sua, tranquillitatique, et otio consecravit.*

[14]II, viii, pp. 87-88.

[15]Hugo Friedrich, *Montaigne* (Bern: 1949), p. 22.

[16]II, xvii, t. II, p. 385.

[17]I, xxxviii (in French ed. I, xxxix), t. I, p. 255.

[18]III, ii, t. III, p. 34.

[19]III, iv, t. III, p. 55.

[20]II, xii, t. II, p. 259.

[21]I, xxxviii, t. I, p. 254.

[22]I, xxxviii, t. I, p. 253.

[23]I, xxxviii, t. I, pp. 259-260.

[24]I, xxxviii, t. I, p. 261.

[25]III, xiii, t. III, p. 385.

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[26]Friedrich, op. cit., p. 20.
[27]See Book 1, Chapter 51, *De la Vanité des paroles*
[28]I, xxv, t. I, p. 166. On theoretical life, see Joachim Ritter, "Die Lehre vom Ursprung der Theorie bei Aristotles," in *Metaphysik und Politik* (Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 9-33.
[29]I, xxxviii, t. I, p. 263.
[30]III, xiii, t. III, p. 328.
[31]I, xxxviii, t. I, p. 262.
[32]III, ix, t. III, pp. 205-206.
[33]II, xviii, t. II, p. 392.

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SIMON SCHAMA

The Unruly Realm: Appetite and Restraint in Seventeenth Century Holland

Is Jan Steen's *Dissolute Household* (Fig. 1) a saturnalia or a sermon? At first sight the question might seem perverse. The comic turmoil unleashed in Steen's domestic burlesques, awash with drink and allied mischiefs, surely proclaims him to be the Lord of Misrule among Dutch artists, the great orchestrator of licentious havoc.[1] The mood evoked by the more familiar of his genre paintings is, after all, the opposite of the controlled serenity of the Delft interiors of Vermeer and de Hooch. Where their compositions are exercises in poise, his overflow with extravagant gestures and Rabelaisian bravura. Where their colors are luminous and transparent, his are livid, earthy, and opaque. They are the masters of ruminative silence; Steen is the virtuoso of theatrical cacophony.[2]

To look at a Steen parlor comedy is to witness something like an invasion. It is rather as if a rout of Yahoos had battered on the door of a reputable household, and then lurched over the threshold, kicking over the milk pails, doing beastly things in the cooking pots, and generally raising hell. And since the cleanliness of kitchen and parlor was treated by the Dutch as a matter of religious propriety, its defilement by diabolical trespass would have been especially traumatic.[3] The word the artist has scratched on the reckoning slate at the right foreground is *bedurfe*, which carries the sense of messed or tainted. And when a kitchen in Holland today is described as "looking like a Jan Steen kitchen," the accusation is simultaneously wry and morally intimidating. In the seventeenth century both Calvinist and humanist writers urged householders to exert the utmost vigilance in guarding their homes against the contamination of vice; so that the Dionysiac unfastening of the moral order by the wanton negligence of a *mother and father* would be tantamount to an act of sabotage, of, as it were, "domicide." In this particular painting, that dereliction of duty is symbolized by the intimacy of the father (a self-portrait) with a courtesan in his own home, while his wife sleeps through the pilfering of her home's virtue.

What is the artist's standpoint in this scenario? As a potential saboteur of respectability, Steen's credentials left little to be desired, being a Catholic, a brewer and tavern licensee, a painter who repeatedly depicted every variety of profanity and, worst of all, someone who drew inspiration from the theater, an art still held in abomination by the Calvinist church. Moreover, the inclusion of his own self-portrait among the imps of Satan populating his pictures might have seemed an act of calculated effrontery: a nose-thumb at the sententious

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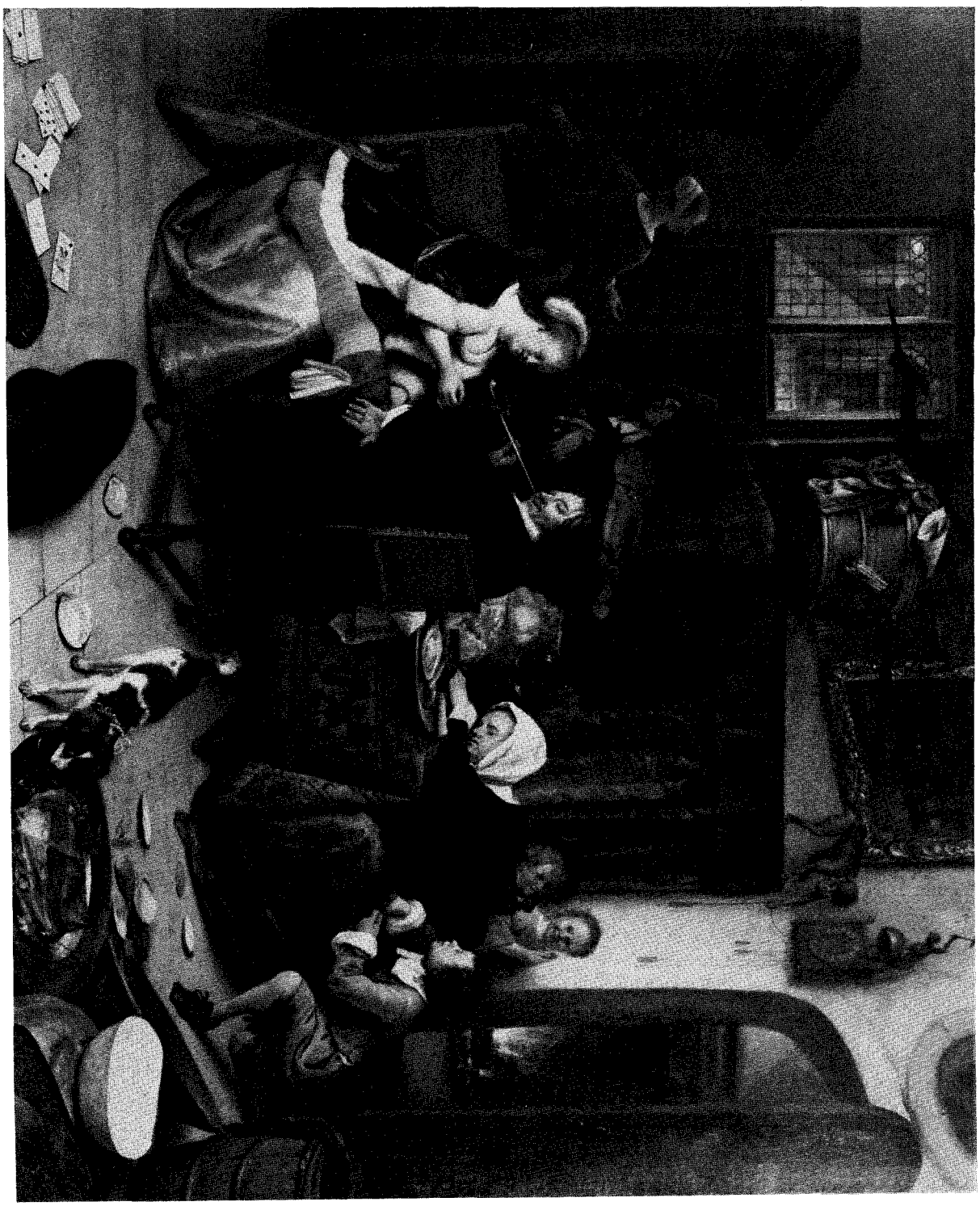

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dominees and doctors of his native Leiden. And many of his characters do deliberately travesty the canons of decorum and polite manners rehearsed in the innumerable manuals devoted to this subject that were produced in the Dutch Republic.[4] Some of his scenes seem to come straight out of a humanist's nightmare. Children torment asinine or myopic schoolmasters; other ragamuffins run around with cats and dogs to which they feed portions of the family dinner; others drain dregs of wine bottles or take illicit drags from tobacco pipes.[5] Often their leers and grimaces seem bereft of childishness; rather, they betray an alarmingly knowing insight into the foibles of their elders. As in so many other respects, Steen has no inhibitions about inverting conventions. In his Bacchic celebrations it is often the precociously worldly children who retain possession of their senses and act as the mischief-makers, while the adults are passive victims—either undone with inebriation or else collapsed in dissipated stupor.

All of which might suggest that Steen's intentions were more ambiguous than a comic celebration of the unbuttoning of gravity. There are, in fact, several indications of this, both implicit and explicit. To begin with, even the most apparently blithe comedies are far more programmatic than a haphazard jumble of anecdotal detail. Brueghel's great canvases of bucolic festivity (to which Steen, like other Dutch painters, owed a great deal) contained an explosion of detail within a formidably tight aesthetic structure, the apparent looseness of content in sharp contrast to the rigor of draftsmanship. Similarly, Steen's array of action and gesture is pinned together by compositions that turn on a central figure or group. Occasionally, though, the bolt preventing the component parts from flying off into centrifugal chaos, or crumbling into debris, seems precariously secured. Of course, this may well be predictable in an artist who turned out around eight hundred paintings in the course of a prodigious career. But just as conceivably, it may have been his intention to infer the elements of a moral order through the vision of its disintegration; so that a hedonistic tableau might simultaneously imply both a moral regimen and the rituals of its parody, without dictating which has the upper hand. Paul Claudel remarked of some Dutch still life paintings that they gave him the presentiment of "arrangements in imminent danger of dissolution."[6] And in a different idiom Steen is able to show, as it were, the dikes breached, but not yet entirely washed away.

Happily, however, it is not necessary to indulge in this sort of speculative supposition in order to gauge Steen's intentions. Like other Dutch genre painters, Codde, Metsu, Breukelenkam, and Maes, he drew freely on the rich storehouse of emblem books—anthologies of proverbs, aphorisms, and maxims, and rhyming manuals of social behavior—to litter his pictures with morally charged symbols.[7] Some of those symbols had their origin in the international repertoire of Renaissance imagery; others, in the more purely native tradition exemplified by Brueghel's *Netherlandish Proverbs*. The epitome of domestic negligence in Steen's morally inverted household, the sleeping mother, was a version of *Acedia*, the sin of sloth, as represented in an engraving of around 1600 by Philips Galle.[8] The image of a woman asleep with her head resting on her hands came to be repeated many times in Dutch genre paintings, one example being Nicolas Maes's *Sleeping Kitchen Maid* (Fig. 2). Taken as a whole, *The Dissolute Household* is really an *omnium gatherum* of visual admonitions. The ape, symbol-

Figure 1. Jan Steen, *The Dissolute Household*
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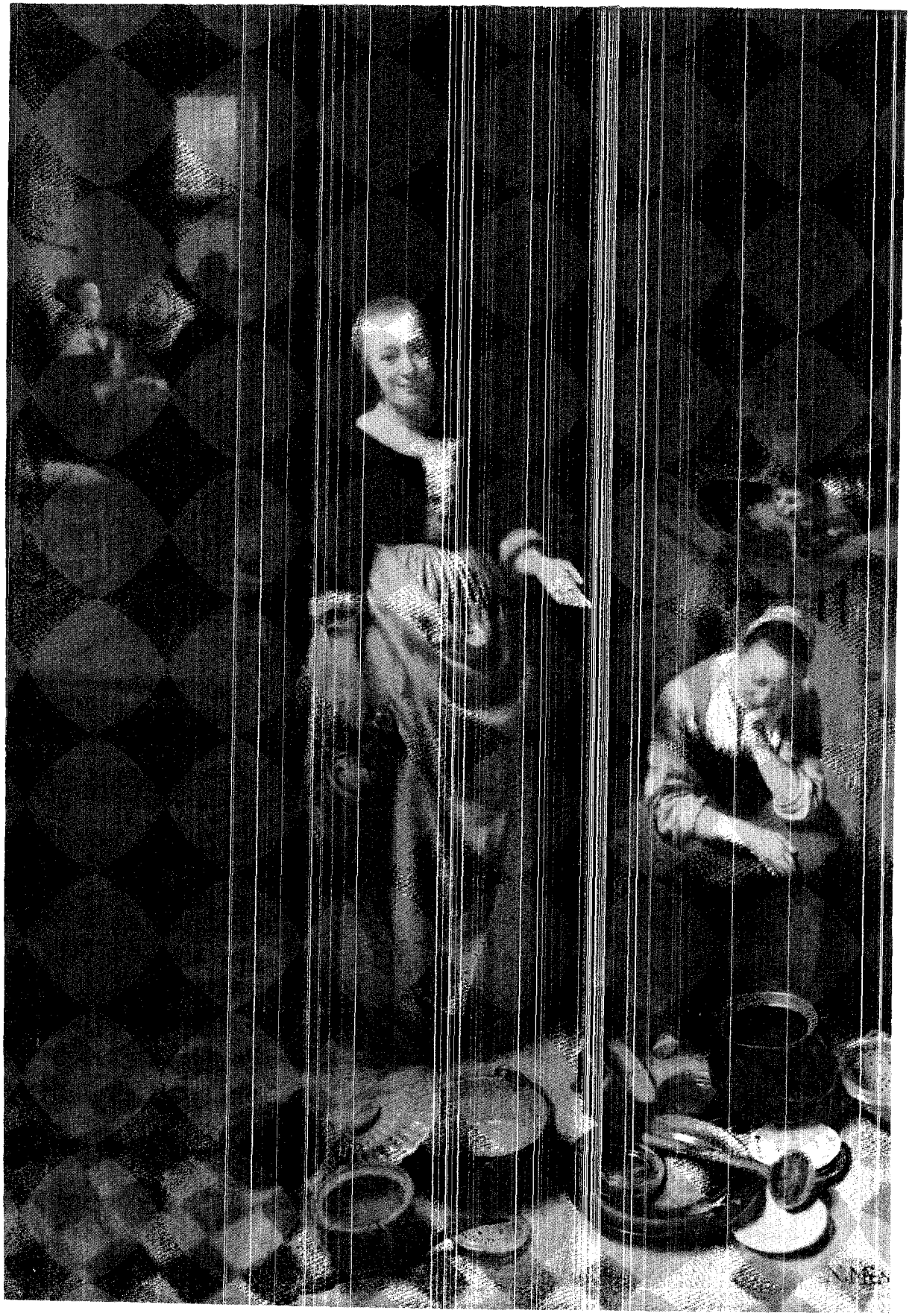

Figure 2. Nicolas Maes, *The Sleeping Kitchen Maid*
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izing folly, stops the hands of the clock to reinforce the moral that, in foolishness, time is forgotten.[9] A child steals from the sleeping woman's pocket, acting out the proverb "Opportunity makes a thief," while the slouch hat on the floor connotes another maxim—"He throws his hat before the door"—signifying casualness or fecklessness. Symbols of lust and profane passion abound throughout the picture. Reading clockwise from the right foreground: the sprig of myrtle growing from the meat (flesh) comes from the plant dedicated to Aphrodite; the oysters strewn around the floor nearly always carry the sense of an aphrodisiac; the playing cards, symbolizing contention as well as passion, prominently display the ace of hearts; the courtesan wears the white feather used as a symbol of her trade; the man rests his hosed leg with obscene innuendo on her lap (names with "kous" [hose] appended were used for sluts: *piskous*, *flapkous*, and so on); a starry-eyed bachelor woos the kitchen maid with the viol, the instrument of love, in front of a bed; a little girl holds up a coin in demonstration of worldliness; and a roaring fire, generally used for the stoking of lust, goes untended in an adjacent room.

Indeed, these images of erotic passion are so densely collected that, notwithstanding Steen's inscription, it has been suggested that this is not a domestic scene at all, but one set in a tavern or even a brothel. This literal hunt for a plausible naturalistic location seems to me to miss the point. Quite apart from this issue, the picture *might* be read as an allegory of the five senses, strongly suggested by the gesture of the five fingers of the man's hand toward the viewer; but this only reinforces the uncomfortable impression, surely intentional, of worldliness and sensual appetite nesting indecently in the domestic parlor. The images of indulgence are, after all, counterbalanced by those of retribution. On the reckoning slate is the inscription *Somma Op*; and the instruments of chastisement—the birch rods, the leper's clap, the rapier, and the crutch—all literally *hang* over the commission of sin, together with that most traumatic admission of shame, soiled linen.

Given that such genre paintings represent not a random clutter of whimsically winked-at transgressions but an array of symbols encoding quite specific moral instructions, it would have been possible for contemporaries to have "read" them as anecdotally organized homilies, much as they would have listened to stories and parables illustrating a preacher's sermons. The immensely popular books on childhood, courtship, and marriage, like Jacob Cats's *Houwelick* (Marriage), or the moralizing emblem books of Johan de Brune and Roemer Visscher, combined tales, verses, and maxims in just this way. In all these idioms an essentially serious message was communicated through artful engagement of the wit and emotions. Where, however, the genre painter, and sometimes the versifier, used humor, broad or wry, the preacher used inspirational terror. Even so, members of congregations whose withers had been wrung by the great coloratura specialists in fire and brimstone like Borstius and Trigland admitted to "enjoying" the frisson of simultaneous fright and joy.

There was, however, no ambiguity about the intended moral payoff of a sermon. The same cannot be said with absolute confidence of a genre painting. Whether those who *enjoyed* a Jan Steen depiction of drunken debauch then went on to search in it, and within themselves, for a weighty lesson, must remain an open question, since no direct testimony of the response of contemporaries sur-

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Figure 3. Jan Steen, *Man Blowing Smoke at a Woman*
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vives, and foreigners like Evelyn usually referred to what were presumably genre paintings as "drolleries." Even when it becomes apparent that both a Rabelaisian form and a moralizing content are present within the same picture, there is no means of externally determining what the painter intended to be the ultimate impression. Did, indeed, he care that much? His task, after all, was merely to evoke sensual transgression with sufficient potency and vividness to put the viewer in the position of choosing whether to luxuriate in its license or to ruminate on the wages of iniquity and the redemptive timeliness of atonement. That, of course, was the classic Erasmian challenge to Christian free will, and it survived amidst all the Calvinist rhetoric of predetermination.

Occasionally, information about the life of the artist does help to make these enigmas less perplexing. The feverishly imaginative (and still underrated) Adriaen van de Venne, for example, who painted *grisailles* of the destitute, the outcast, and vagabonds in the Netherlands, though very much the disciple of Brueghel, invested them with fantastic and bizarre forms that were conjured from his own imagination. Van de Venne is known to have been part of an intensely pious Calvinist, predominantly Zeelander circle based at Middelburg on the island of Walcheren.[10] He also wrote moralizing verse and illustrated not only the books of "Father" Cats, but also his own, including the extraordinary, picaresque *Belacchende Wereld* (Laughable World), written largely in argot and portraying no less than forty-two species of rogues, beggars, cut-throats, and frauds at large on the highways of the Netherlands. From his work in these various media it is possible to see how a comic vehicle was lent to an essentially grave purpose, namely the illustration of the "folly" of the worldly life. It is much more difficult to see how the different segments of Steen's sensibility related to one another. Religious topics occupied a large portion of his output, but in his perceptive analysis of those paintings, Baruch Kirschenbaum makes the point that their originality lay precisely in importing genre vignettes into biblical tableaux where they would be least expected. As in the theatrical presentations of Bible stories, so abominated by the Calvinist church, his art was to commingle the tragic and the comic, the spiritual and the earthy.[11]

The same might be said of some of Steen's bawdiest pictures. From the position of the empty goblet between the legs of the central figure in *Man Blowing Smoke at a Woman* (Fig. 3), together with the canopy bed in the background and the coarse innuendo of the vessel spout, there is no doubt at all of her profession. The picture was probably a *bordeel* (brothel) scene, one of a substantial genre in Dutch art that had developed out of earlier "merry company" scenes produced by painters like Buytwech and Dirck Hals.[12] However coarse the subjects, many did retain moral overtones. Apart from the alcoholic slumber of the woman, visual references to smoking simultaneously connoted idleness, the brevity of worldly existence ("For my days are consumed like smoke"—Psalm 102:3), and lust. Even so, it is far from self-evident whether the painting is meant to excite disgust, mirth, contempt, or all three.

Similarly, in the *Scene at a Tavern* (Fig. 4), in which the guffawing figure has the features of Steen, every symbol is so contrived as to hint at the unchastity of the girl, her likely pregnancy, and the role in her predicament of the dissipated figure seated on the right. The latter pokes his finger in his pipe bowl, acting out, through a crude gesture, a rueful admission of his misdeed. A boy at the

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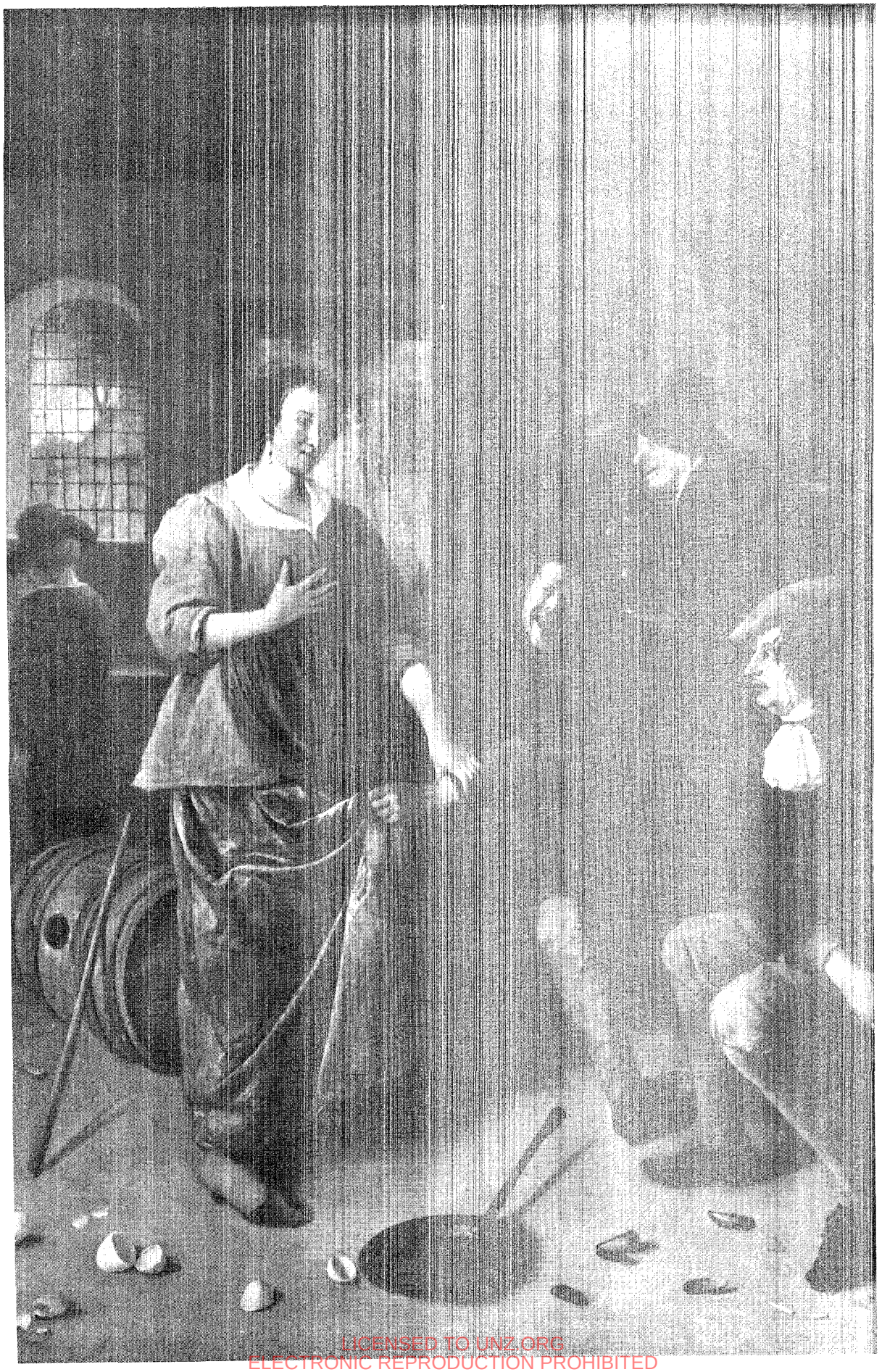

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rear scrutinizes a chamber pot for telling symptoms, much as Steen's physicians examine specimens in his *Doctor's Visit* paintings.[13] And in case the message remains obscure, the debris of smashed eggshells announce the breaking of fragile virginity; the open mussels allude to an obscene colloquialism for the vagina;[14] and the open *flapkan* flagon, to yet another euphemism for trollop. And yet, the pensive expression worn by the girl as she eyes her malefactor, coupled with the brutal hilarity of the man lifting her skirts, all conspire to arouse sympathy for her plight. Is the hand on her breast merely another clue to budding maternity, or is it a gesture of contrition?

The austerely iconographic way to resolve such ambiguities is to hunt down a paradigmatic or classical image, usually in the dense groves of Renaissance emblem symbolism, from which the painted variation is held to derive. The assumption is then made that whatever is morally denoted by such an image is transferred to the new context, along with the transposed symbol. To the cultural historian, unduly preoccupied as he may appear to be with the specifics of time and place, this is bound to seem an excessively mechanical approach and one that may run the risk of underestimating the distorting peculiarities of the culture into which the image is implanted. What may result from the graft of a universal connotation onto a parochial language (and there were few more parochial languages in the early modern period than Dutch) may have the appearance, but not the deep sense, of the ancestral image. Indeed, it may only be explicable by reference to the immediate external data shaping that culture, amongst which are such conventional concerns of the historian as money, superstition, and politics.

The anthropologist Victor Turner has described the components of a symbolic language as functioning on three levels.[15] The first is "exegetic," that is, carrying an association not self-evidently or customarily denoted by use and appearance. The second is "operational," that is, the normative charge of the image, eliciting fear, anger, pleasure, hope, or whatever. The third is "positional," that is, its structural relationship with other symbols within the same language. It seems to me that what has been established by the immensely sophisticated, rigorous, and illuminating iconography of Dutch genre painting is that, while it is possible, through conscientious sleuthing, to decode the secondary associations of symbols and to establish relationships between them (Turner's first and third categories), it has proved much more elusive to disclose the overall intention underlying their visual assembly in any way that an anthropologist or semiologist would recognize as coherent.

Of course there remains the further possibility that all this moral ambivalence is actually disingenuous or hypocritical. This argument would claim that Jan Steen merely dragged some didactic and sentimental baggage along with his comedy as a sop to pious convention or, even more reprehensibly, as a form of moral self-exoneration. Once again, there is no external evidence to support such a view, though the assumption of feigned piety, the better to mask transgression, was, to be sure, an abiding preoccupation in a culture where hortative Scriptural rhetoric seeped into the language of daily intercourse. It is also true that the line between titillation and outrage in ostensibly moral art is often very fine. Much (too much, some would say) writing in Britain in the 1970s—the

Figure 4. Jan Steen, *A Scene at a Tavern*
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novels of Amis, *père et fils*, being the most obvious examples—has been haunted by the unwholesomeness of flesh and the spectacle of its corruption. Yet very often the form in which that revulsion has been expressed is an exceedingly close, if ironic, view of the behavior it most purports to abhor. There are, of course, perfectly good precedents for such an approach in the caustic satire of the eighteenth century. But the suspicion of disingenuousness is not entirely allayed by reference to pedigree. If *Moll Flanders* was a moral document, was Wilkes's *Essay on Women* one, as he claimed? Conversely, it is altogether to the credit of Ian McEwan, perhaps the most gifted writer to have emerged in England in recent years, to have resisted the invitation to classify his highly erotic short stories as tracts for our times.[16]

Similar suspicions persist on examining some of the morality literature of seventeenth century Holland. Jacob Cats was so relentlessly concerned to patrol the manners and morals of the young and vulnerable and to alert them to the consequences of depravity, that he spent hundreds of pages chronicling the deeds of the lascivious, and in detail from which prurience was not wholly absent.[17] In the second half of the century, an entire subgenre of pornographic literature attempted to disguise its nakedness with a fig leaf of respectability so flimsy, that only the most credulous of readers could possibly have been deceived. One of the most notorious (and internationally reprinted) of these books was *'t Amsterdamsche Hoerdom* (Amsterdam's Whoredom), which purported to be a lament by a sheriff of that city for the iniquities committed within its precincts. In order to savor the stench of the degenerate fleshpots, however, it proved necessary to escort the narrator (his Rotterdam counterpart) on a tour of the infamous "Musicos" and the most prostitute-infested streets of the town. What was dressed up as a cry of despair for the fallen Jerusalem was actually a gazetteer of Dutch vice, complete with useful tips on prices, addresses, customs of the house(s), liquor, entertainment, and indispensable advice on how to avoid being dunned and/or infected. In one passage of sublime disingenuousness, an overheard conversation between a whore and her doltish client, which, moreover, attains a degree of obscenity hair-raising even by the standards of the later twentieth century, is prefaced by the pious disclaimer that "never in all my days have I heard speech of such repulsive profanity."[18]

It would not do, though, to generalize about the divided sensibilities of Dutch culture from the clumsily assumed self-righteousness of pornographers. More often, a resort was made to the profane in order to uphold the sacred, rather than vice versa. As Bernard de Mandeville pointed out in his aptly titled but much misunderstood book, *A Modest Defence of Public Stews*,[19] the Amsterdam magistrates tolerated widespread prostitution in their city from a realistic understanding of the needs of large maritime populations periodically discharged at its port after long voyages. The whores were required to service the crews in order to protect the virtue of respectable women from what would otherwise have been violent molestation.[20] Shrewd though this rather unadorned utilitarianism was, it was only half the real explanation. For, paradoxically, the *sine qua non* of this pragmatic toleration was that the magistrates should, on no account, appear to be condoning it. Hence the periodic roundups of whores, usually those who had smuggled themselves in from Germany and the Spanish Netherlands; their display, for public contumely, on the scaffold; flogging and occasional branding; and the incarceration of a selected few for

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corrective labor in the city "Spin-House."[21] In this somewhat ethically versatile fashion, the municipal authorities simultaneously satisfied the Calvinist insistence on exemplary punishment, the humanist demand for the constructive reform of manners, and the pragmatic provision of an ancillary service for trade and traders. The underremunerated bailiff's men, through the extortion of "protective licenses" from procuresses (as well as occasional blackmail of substantial citizens discovered on their premises), were provided with an additional source of perquisites into the bargain.[22]

These arrangements might seem to be an instance of the most brazen hypocrisy imaginable. Many similar examples could be drawn from the realms of other appetites to make the same point. Sumptuary laws regulating the scale, expense, and lavishness of banquets were ignored when those feasts were given by any body of public standing in the city—guilds; militia companies; poetic "academies"; the great colonial and trading companies; regents and regentesses of charitable foundations—all of which included virtually anyone of any substance at all. To the repeated fulminations of the Church Synods against Sabbatical violations, the lay magistrates charged with enforcement usually registered pious assent and then proceeded to ignore them. Each of the violating groups maintained some principled rationale for its Sunday activities. Cloth dyers, bleachers, and shearers in the textile-finishing trades who needed extended drying periods, and the sugar refiners, soap boilers, glass blowers, and brewers who depended on continuously fired furnaces, all complained that they could not arbitrarily interrupt their work without sustaining unacceptable losses. Equally, the *schutter* militia battalions who paraded in full uniform, drums beating and colors flying, on Sunday afternoons argued that their exercises were an important part of civic vigilance and communal morale.[23] Other less obviously patriotic pursuits—angling and bird-shooting parties; open-air markets and games of catch, golf, and tennis on the grassy spaces at the edge of town; and the ubiquitous enticements of tavern and gambling houses—all continued unabated under the noses of authorities nominally committed to their curtailment.

To argue, however, that this is irrefutable evidence of a culture deeply stained by hypocrisy[24] is to presuppose a self-conscious and knowing separation of values and the calculated selection of one or other sets at the mere command of base expediency. While theoretically this is a perfectly plausible scenario, I do not believe it reflects the authentic nature of Dutch culture, from which social cynicism was conspicuously absent. What does seem to be true, however, is the simultaneous operation of two apparently divergent value systems. The one embraced money; power; authority; the gratification of appetite; the indulgence of domestic epicureanism in food, drink, costume, and furnishing; the collective celebration of community in ritual feasts and banquets; the innocence of fairs and pastimes; and the nobility of arts and science. The other invoked austerity; piety; frugality; parsimony; sobriety; the vanity of worldly success; the exclusive community of sacred congregation; the abhorrent frivolousness of art, and the impertinent blasphemies of science.

So far from these opposing norms guaranteeing a permanent condition of cultural schizophrenia, or else perpetuating forms of civil war, they functioned *together* within a single spacious, overarching community. Within that culture there were, of course, some specific groups that existed more or less entirely within one set of norms—actors and whores at one extreme and *predikants* at the

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other. Even then, however, the phenomena of the pious prostitute and the worldly churchman were no less common in the seventeenth century than at other periods. The brothels with the best music in Amsterdam, it was claimed, were closed from Friday night to Saturday night to allow their Jewish fiddlers to celebrate the Sabbath; others made a shrewd investment in portable organs, hitherto the monopoly of the Church! And for the majority of Dutch men and women, these conflicting beliefs existed in a kind of complementary symbiosis; assisting them to be effective in the world of material power (on which their very survival depended) without at the same time believing themselves to have forfeited salvation by so doing. And despite the partitions formally separating the two worlds, there were routes by which goods accumulated according to the virtues of one sector could be morally laundered and transferred as pious objects to the other. The most obvious such transferences were the immense sums expended on charitable institutions for the aged and infirm in Holland that, as foreign visitors attested, more closely resembled the handsome abodes of their benefactors than the dwelling places of supplicants.

To propose the complementarity of ostensibly opposed norms as a way of grasping the peculiarities of Dutch culture is to offer an account based on a very rough-and-ready kind of structuralism that many social anthropologists may perhaps find offensively inappropriate. Nonetheless, if one may wrench from that methodology its assumption that a set of beliefs *in their social operation* may only be rendered intelligible in terms of their relationship with their opposites, this approach seems to be a useful way of comprehending the felicitous ambiguities of Dutch culture. I am, however, very far from suggesting this as a general application for other early modern European societies. Natalie Davis has very plausibly delineated similar traits shared in a curiously symbiotic fashion between Protestant and Catholic communities in sixteenth century Lyon.[25] But much of the history of seventeenth century Europe could be written in terms of the belligerent determination of its rulers and clerics to impose their particular version of absolutist uniformity on their respective states. If they suffered some degree of plurality, it was, as the increasingly wretched history of the French Huguenots bore witness, only by reluctant default. The fact that the Dutch Republic was an exception (there were others) to this depressing history of persecution and counterpersecution was not due to any monopoly of enlightenment. Following the death of William the Silent, his successor Stadholders, together with the militant Calvinists, would dearly have loved to impose a stringent uniformity on the young Republic. During the first half of the seventeenth century both Princes and Synods made periodic attempts to impose their will on the recalcitrant oligarchs of the Dutch towns through a combination of military threats and carefully orchestrated riot. The most dramatic of these offensives ended with the disgrace, trial, and execution of the Lands Advocate John of Oldenbarneveld and the triumphant Synod of Dordrecht in 1618. In the long run, however, these aggressive tactics could bear no fruit. The dependence of the Republic on the fortunes and fleets of Amsterdam patricians hostile to any notion of godly captaincy ensured the frustration of ambitious shows of authority.

The highly federally inclined "regents" of Holland, assembled in their States, repeatedly argued that the Reformed religion had been *one* of the motives

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for resistance to the Spanish crown rather than the sole motive. The "True Freedom" that conferred sovereignty on the States of the separate provinces and on the municipalities comprising Holland had been, they argued, the rock on which their liberties were based, and they were not disposed to substitute a new form of absolutism for the old. Although formal toleration of other denominations proved impossible after 1618, the de facto version provided virtually unmolested conditions for the two hundred thousand Catholics within the frontiers of the Republic and freedom to worship openly for other Protestant sects and for the Jews.

There was, moreover, another even more cogent reason for developing this kind of *modus vivendi* in which neither zealots nor Erastians had an absolute say in determining the pattern of Dutch life. Even the fiercest Calvinist granted that the survival of the Republic in a hostile and predatory world crucially depended on its economic strength. To confine economic opportunities to those compatible with a code of Christian ethics (however favored by the notion of work as Calling) or to those areas of trade that best prosecuted the war against the Catholic powers was, in effect, to cut off one's nose to spite one's face. Moreover, if the Synods were incapable of enforcing prohibitions on pigeon shooting on Sundays, there was scant chance of constraining the East India Company to do their bidding. Whether the Church liked it or not, Dutch merchants continued to buy Spanish merino wool and Portugese salt (when the Iberian powers let them) and to resist the diversion of large sums of capital to enterprises more concerned with hounding the hordes of anti-Christ than to maximizing profit.[26]

Amsterdam's position as a great global entrepôt—the pivot on which the trade of the seventeenth century world turned—precluded the possibility of tight moral regulation. In terms of its social topography it was the exact opposite of Calvin's Geneva, ten times its size and permeable to the great tides of war, ideas, and money sweeping across northern Europe at this time. Ringed by its mountain barrier and of marginal economic consequence, Geneva could extrude the heterodox from its community with little trouble. Amsterdam *needed* great encampments of foreigners in its midst to function properly. By definition, a staple market was turned outward to face the world; Geneva was turned inward to protect the sanctity of its congregation and to specialize in banking and clocks.

The great port metropolis was not just an inauspicious place for religious regulation by virtue of the necessities it furnished for the Republic—grain from the Baltic, naval stores for the great shipyards on the Zaan, and the like. It also functioned as a great supermarket of opulence. It became known as the "pearl" of cities or, in the words of one English traveler:

> It is justly called the modern Tyre as being the most beautiful, noble, opulent trading city in the world. Strangers are struck with amazement at the Sight of it. London is much larger and more populous; but is far excelled by it in Cleanliness, Beauty, Magnificence and Trade.[27]

The marketing of the sumptuous took its place alongside the northern staples as a vital element of Dutch prosperity. Besides herring, rye, and pitch, Holland offered Ming porcelain, Japanese lacquer work, East Indian rubies, South American emeralds, and the great mother-of-pearl nautilus cups that figure so

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prominently in Dutch still life paintings. Marrano Jews brought their skills at cutting and polishing diamonds from Antwerp, and goldsmiths and silversmiths became a substantial element in the community of craftsmen, numbering over three hundred masters by the 1670s. In the earlier part of the century, smiths like the Vianen family were producing tazzi and ewers modeled in the voluptuous, suitably fluid "auricular" style, at the farthest possible remove from clichés about Dutch austerity and simplicity.

Indeed, to a disgruntled minister of the Calvinist Church attempting to preach the virtues of homely frugality, it must have seemed that Amsterdam and other towns of Holland (especially Delft) were expressly in the business of supplying goods and services for the Seven Deadly Sins. The archetypical symbol of *vanitas*, the mirror, once the monopoly of the degenerate Venetians, had become another Dutch speciality, combining the skills of the thriving glass industry with supplies of mercury from Spanish America, once peace had been concluded in 1648. Mirrors of all shapes and sizes were a ubiquitous feature of Dutch interiors, as both travelers' reports and "high-style" pictures by artists of fashion like Verspronck and van der Helst attest. Much of the furnishing in Vermeer interiors—marble floors; oriental rugs or their indigenous variant (woven by immigrant artisans from Brabant or Flanders) thought too precious to place on the floor; nutwood or ebony chests and the miscellaneous commodities of the "cultured" crafts such as harpsichords, maps, and fine books—all attest to this early preoccupation with the refinement of domestic taste.

Other worldly appetites were equally well catered to. Despite the jeremiads issuing from the pulpit on the "sinful flood tides" of alcohol threatening to inundate the Fatherland, towns like Dordrecht, Delft, and Rotterdam, as well as Amsterdam, continued to prosper from their strategic position in the trans-European wine trade.[28] Rhine and Moselle wines were dispatched to markets in southern France, Spain, Italy, and England; Burgundies and Bordeaux went eastward to Scandinavia, Poland, and Germany, and south to Switzerland. Tobacco smoking, damned by the Church as a filthy and almost certainly aphrodisiac habit, developed swiftly into a national addiction practiced by women as well as men, and if they could beg or steal it, by children on the sly. The fumes emanating from a *trek-schuit* passenger barge loaded with "tobacco-suckers" were so dense, they were said to drive foxes from their lairs. Even the clergy was not immune, for the Synod of Schiedam in 1631 expressed its concern that its predecessor at Schoonhoven a year earlier appeared to have got through several hundred guilders' worth of the noxious stuff at a few sittings, a lapse attributed to the misguided hospitality of the burgomasters of the town.[29] Fifteen or twenty pipes a day per head were not unusual. Pipe manufacture at Gouda supported a work force of around twelve thousand, including women and children; and in addition to the thriving drying and spinning works in Amsterdam and on the Zaan, the Dutch were the first nation to supplement expensive Virginia leaf by growing an indigenous crop in the east of the country around Amersfoort.[30]

Paradoxically, the most regularly anathematized commodities were those that superficially seem the most innocuous: sugar and spice. Brazilian sugar refined in Holland became widely available in the 1640s, and if not cheap, was no longer a luxury article. When it was combined with spices brought back by

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the East India Company—nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, cloves, allspice, and, what from its heat was taken to be the Devil's spice, ginger—sugar transformed the richness and delicacy of confectionery. It was at this time that the traditional pancakes, waffles, and *poffertjes* were complemented by sweet and spice sauces, and that those miracles of Netherlandish cooking, honey cakes and caramel candies of all kinds, first won a following. As the first recipe books began to appear, the Church lamented that a cult of succulence and sugary greed was being created to which nearly every housewife, husband, kitchen maid, and child seemed a helpless devotee. In a fit of dyspeptic chagrin the minister Belcampius complained:

> Sweetness and excess is today grown so great that were they not ashamed to do so men would found an Academy to which they would send all cooks and pastie bakers to teach them how to excel in the preparation of sauces, spices, cakes and confections so that they should taste delicious. . . . Palates have become so demanding that nowadays there is scarcely any sauce that can satisfy them. . . . The men of today would dearly like to hail cooks and other servants of their gluttony with trumpets of honour and crowns of laurel.[31]

It was precisely the beguiling innocence of these weaknesses that so incensed the upholders of militant Calvinist asceticism, who damned them as follies on the high road to Hell. The Church tried to ban sweetmeats and wine from all baptismal feasts, weddings, and wakes, and failing in that, attempted with even less success to ban those celebrations outright. These imprecations had little effect, because the Dutch had elaborated their domesticity so far that they were able to indulge the almost universal craving for *gezelligheid* (cosiness or comfort) without, as they supposed, incurring the odium of luxury. Put another way, within the *forms* of simplicity they had poured the immense richness and variety of their social cornucopia.

Two examples may suffice to suggest what I have in mind. Up to the 1660s it is true that black and white (ironically considered the Spanish mode) dominated the colors of Dutch costume. But without getting themselves up in the hues of Venice, the Dutch managed to convey an impression of considerable sartorial elegance through refining the *quality* of their clothes to the highest degree. Thus they produced a dye of deepest black to go with the fine serges and soft velours of Leiden and Haarlem. Their lace, either imported from Flanders or produced by refugee artisans from the South, was the most exquisitely worked in Europe. And their linens were bleached to a whiteness of peerless brilliance.

The second example may be even more telling. The legendary Dutch breakfast (*ontbijt*) began as a small meal (*banketje*), or snack, consisting of the fairly austere ingredients of bread, cheese, salt herring, and a glass of milk, buttermilk, or ale. Even as early as the 1620s, however, it had begun the process of elaboration that turned it into the gargantuan repast that leaves tourists dragging their heels on their early morning tours of Amsterdam. The foods that were served preserved their eucharistic origins but had developed out of all recognition from sixteenth century frugality both in variety and quantity. Every morning the *Hoornman* would supply, even to fairly modest homes, bread of at least three different kinds: the coarser *semelbrood* of admixtures of rye and grits that Dr. Beverwijk insisted was wholesome for the gut; the fine white

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wheaten loaf; and a sweet loaf studded with fruits and sugared spices. A self-respecting merchant's table might offer as many as six or seven breads; five cheeses—Leiden cheese dotted with cumin seed; two varieties of Gouda, the matured golden sweetmilk wheels with their perfume of old wine, and the creamier kind (now adulterated into what passes for "Dutch" the world over); a green sheep's cheese from the Texel (which alarmed some foreign visitors who believed it was made from the animal's dung); and a green cheese from Friesland mixed with cloves. There might even be two varieties of butter, since whether Delfland butter was superior to Rijnland was a matter for serious contention, at home and in the tavern. And instead of, or as well as, fish, there would be thin slices of salt meat, carved from the ox or pig slaughtered in November as part of the annual rites of the Dutch culinary calendar. Similar kinds of elaboration occurred in other meals. The once humble *hutsepot* of mutton stew, when it incorporated dried or fresh fruits, lemons, and ginger and other spices, became capable of almost infinitely satisfying variations. Seafood did not stop at herring and cod but included soles, whiting, haddock, eel, oysters, crabs, and lobsters, none of which were deemed luxuries in the seventeenth century.[32]

Caught between the delights of what the French traveler Parival described as a "terrestrial paradise" on the one hand[33] and the admonishments of their ministers on the other, the Dutch developed a strategy of domestic pleasure that enabled them to slake their thirst for the good life without, they hoped, jeopardizing their souls. But a second way in which to cohabit two worlds was to try to partition time and space into areas reserved, respectively, for the sacred and the profane. The fact that the urban Dutch took their pleasures seriously does not mean that they winked at religion. The contrary seems to be the case. Spasms of collective atonement in the form of prayer-and-fast days at moments of dire national crisis (and there were many of these in the seventeenth century) were a periodically necessary catharsis, a sort of evacuation of guilt and terror at the accumulated consequences of transgression. Reunited in the communion of the Church (and all the signs are that they took explusion from communion very seriously indeed), they could reassert their identity as a providentially ordained nation.

There were also, however, secular forms of community that supplied alternative and even parody ritual. Sometimes the levels of travesty were very elaborate. Guild feasts had their own drinking hierarchy that inverted that of the normal practice of the craft brotherhood; but then there were also *droncke-gilden* (usually celebrated by students or apprentices) that themselves parodied guild feasts and were thus travesties of a travesty. Banquets and feasts were not just pretexts for massive gluttony and drinking bouts (though very often they began at noon and continued to midnight). An intrinsic part of their proceedings was the interminable series of toasts, countertoasts, and speeches that plainly taxed the patience of sorely tried foreign visitors unable to comprehend anything of what was said. But the Dutch were republicans with a passion for ceremony and for the preservation of solemnity or mock-solemnity amidst Bacchic euphoria. The occasions on which they could indulge this penchant were, to understate the matter, frequent. There were feasts of militia; feasts of chambers of rhetoric, feasts of guilds, and feasts of students; feasts of magistrates and feasts of wardens of charitable foundations (especially frowned on by the Church).

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Family feasts occurred on saints' days, birthdays, baptisms, weddings, funerals, on the occasion of a young man's promotion to a commission in the navy or a degree at the university and a young woman's betrothal, or the beginning of a young wife's lying-in. Feasts marked historic anniversaries in the history of the town, the province, or the Republic, victories at sea or on land, treaties signed with belligerent states; the relief of a siege, the capture of a treasure fleet; the announcement of a record dividend; the birthday of the Prince of Orange or the commencement in office of a new Pensionary. Nor were these lighthearted little affairs. A baptismal party with any pretensions to jollity might offer up to fifty dishes and quantities of wine and fortified wines at which even the most hardened Venetians and English gagged. And all this was in a country we still think of as Calvinist.

The most sustained experience of benign license in the Netherlands was the *kermis*, or fair, often held twice a year, in spring and autumn, in many of the major towns. There were also innumerable informal *kermissen* that took place in the countryside to celebrate obscure saints' days in the ancient calendar, and since they were often held on Sundays, incurred the special umbrage of the Synods.[34] At the other extreme of magnificently organized euphoria was the renowned two-week long Hague *kermis*, the greatest of them all, inaugurated amidst much pomp and ceremony and for which the not terribly Saturnalian figure of William III is said to have pined from his fastness at Whitehall. Notwithstanding the participation of many official bodies like the *schutterij* militia and the city burgomasters in its opening rites, the urban *kermis* was, like other carnivals throughout Europe, a festival of inversion where apprentices guyed masters and journeymen, the young bearded the old, and women propositioned men.[35] Sometimes the fairs would be tented on spaces specifically outside the formal jurisdiction of the magistracy, at the edge of, or in between, towns or in areas privileged by having been "granted," by the Prince of Orange or some other notable, for this express purpose. For the limited period of its duration the conventions constraining Dutch life would be relaxed and moral order stood on its head, exactly as in a Steen painting. Its *dramatis personae* were parodies of those invested with authority in "real" time and space. Soothsayers and clairvoyants would usurp the prophetic role of the preacher; actors would, literally, make a mummery of historical heroes and contemporary pretentions; quacks and alchemists would take the place of physicians, and peddlers and hawkers that of guildsmen. Its stalls were dwellings for those who had no fixed abode, no claims on *burgherschap* (residential citizenship): gypsies; transient musicians and tumblers; exotics of doubtful origin; freed slaves with hair-raising tales of Turkish barbarity; and the ultimate parody of the "normal"—freaks, midgets, and giants. License also prevailed in eating and drinking habits. Sugar reigned supreme, as pastry cooks and confectioners vied to produce the most acclaimed pancakes and candies. No one, it was said of the Hague *kermissen* of the mid-century, could hold a candle to Romeijn, the great waffle king from Rijswijk.

The *kermis* was what social scientists in an unlovely phrase would classify as an agency of social control. But it would be misleading to give the impression that it functioned so successfully as an occasional pressure outlet, that for the rest of the time the two "worlds" of the Dutch were sealed off from each other. The splendid proverb "*Het is kermis in de hel*" (It is fair-time in Hell) is used to

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Figure 5. Nicolaes Maes, *The Listening Housewife*
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describe the phenomenon of sunshine gleaming through rain and perfectly conveys the simultaneity of vice and virtue, appetite and restraint. Even today the disconcerting adjacence of vice and virtue, squalor and piety in contemporary Amsterdam raises the eyebrows of tourists accustomed to a more discreet compartmentalization of experience.

The persistent refusal of unruly appetite to be governed by modest restraint in Holland meant that the odd double-life of the Dutch was often fraught with agonies of anxiety, guilt, and self-recrimination as they tried to reconcile the available with the acceptable. What lay in between was the ordeal of temptation, lying in wait around every corner, in a bowl of ripening fruit begging to be devoured, in the heady fragrance of a garden of hyacinths, or in the inviting form of a tavern girl at Shrovetide. Their response to these trials imposed by Providence to test their mettle (so the preachers said) was understandably ambivalent. Those same preachers, after all, *needed* the goats to make the sheep look whiter. And much of Dutch culture reflects all these uncertainties. In still life paintings a lemon peel often spirals down from a table, expressing the tortuous, twisting business of life, while beside it is placed a glittering green rummer of white wine. The juxtaposition silently signals the cautionary maxim "From the sweetest wine, the tartest vinegar"; and this combination of enticement and admonition was precisely the idiom employed by Steen in many of his genre paintings. Even more haunting, though, is the quizzical gaze of the serving maid in Nicolas Maes's little picture (Fig. 5) as she halts on a staircase (another spiral symbol of the turning motions of life) and eavesdrops on a pair of lovers in the scullery. Suspended as she is between the worlds of virtue above and vice below, she raises a finger to her lips, possibly in the attitude of *silentia*, and turns her face, not to Providence for illumination, but with knowing collusion, directly to the viewer. And she smiles.

References

[1]For the themes of comic inversion, see Mikhail Bakhtin, tr. Helene Iswolsky, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1968); and Svetlana Alpers, "Realism as a comic mode: low life painting through Bredero's eyes," *Simiolus*, 8 (1975–76): 115-144.

[2]The literary and dramatic derivations of many of Steen's paintings are discussed in S. J. Gudlaugsson, *Jan Steen bij de komedianten* (The Hague: 1945) and C. W. de Groot, *Jan Steen, Beeld en Woord*, (Utrecht-Nijmegen: 1952).

[3]J. N. Parival, for instance, in his popular *Les Delices de la Hollande* (Amsterdam: 1661) p. 20, referred to Dutch housewives as being "*idolâtres à l'excès*" in their concern for cleanliness. Many other travelers noted the ritualistic aspects of washing the sidewalk in front of houses, especially since it contrasted with apparent indifference about cleanliness of person at mealtimes. Could the establishment of "clean zones" within and without the house have been a kind of negative territorial marker? Many of the suggestions raised by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* (London: 1975) concerning purity rituals and the cultural relativity of cleanliness criteria seem to me to be highly apposite in this context.

[4]Much the most popular were the works of the prolific versifier and essayist—and a statesman who was Grand Pensionary of Holland under Stadholder Frederik Henry—Jacob Cats. Cats's works like *Maagdepligt* (the duties of a maiden), *Trou-Ringh* (similar advice for bachelors), and *Houwelick* (marriage) were reprinted many times in the seventeenth century, and if his publisher, Schipper, is to be believed, had sales running into tens of thousands. Other important writers in this vein were Jan Harmenszoon Krul, whose *Wegh-Wyzer ter Deughden* (Path-Finder of Virtues) and *Minne-Spiegel ter Deughden* (A Lovers' Mirror of Virtues) were, like the works of Cats, Visscher, Rollenhagen, de Brune, and others, profusely illustrated with engravings or, in the cheaper octavo editions, woodcuts, and were manifestly intended for a popular readership.

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[5]See, for instance, the *World Turned Upside Down*, which actually bears the legend "In Weelde Sie Toe" (In Prosperity Be Vigilant) in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna; the *Vrolijke Gezelschap* (Merry Company) in the Mauritshuis in The Hague, in which Steen himself offers a pipe to a young boy; and the *School* in the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

[6]Paul Claudel, *The Eye Listens*, tr. Elsie Pell, (New York: 1950) p. 48.

[7]For a bibliography of Dutch emblem literature, see A. de Vries, *De Nederlandsche Emblemata, Geschiedenis en Bibliografie tot de 18de Eeuw* (Amsterdam: 1899). All scholars in this field are in the debt of Professor E. de Jongh whose work *Zinne en minnebeelden in de schilderkunst van de 17de eeuw* (Amsterdam-Utrecht: 1967) was of pioneering importance. The exhibition organized under his auspices at the Rijksmuseum in 1976, *Tot Lering en Vermaak* (For Instruction and Diversion), was the first serious enterprise devoted to relating symbolism in Dutch genre painting with its sources in moral literature, and its catalogue is of fundamental importance in illuminating this topic. An English translation is forthcoming.

[8]*Tot Lering en Vermaak* (Amsterdam, 1976) pp. 145-147. See also the excellent introduction on this subject by Christopher Brown, *Dutch Genre Painting* (National Gallery, London: 1978), pp. 145-147.

[9]H. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: 1952). In other contexts the ape stood for *impudentia* or shamelessness.

[10]L. J. Bol, "Een Middelburgse Bruegel-groep," *Oud Holland* (1958), is as yet the only available introduction to the work of van de Venne.

[11]Baruch D. Kirschenbaum, *The Religious and Historical Paintings of Jan Steen* (Oxford: 1977) pp. 99-100.

[12]Brothel scenes were a development of the less explicit "merry company" scenes originated by Willem Buytewech and Dirck Hals and were in part intended to illustrate the degeneration of morality before the Primal Deluge, a subject very close to Dutch susceptibilites. By the middle of the 17th Century the *bordeeltjes* had become distinct from the more anodyne representations of feasting and drunken dissipation in mixed company, but it is not always easy to identify the one or the other genre. Jan Steen's coarsest brothel scenes, complete with procuresses, exchanges of money, and particular attributes of prostitutes, leave very little room for ambiguity.

[13]See, for instance, the *Doctor's Visit* at the Wellington Museum, Apsley House, London.

[14]J. A. Huisman, *Nette en Onnette woorden* (Hilversum-Antwerp: 1962). Crude references to the "mossel" recur in inscriptions on, for example, rummers and tobacco boxes; see Jeroen Jeroense, *Koddige en Ernstige Opschriften* (Amsterdam: 1696). For many other visual *double-entendres*, see E. de Jongh, "Erotica in Vogelperspectief. De dubbelzinnigheid van een reeks 17de eeuw genrevoorstellingen," *Simiolus*, 3 (1968).

[15]Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, New York: 1967) p. 50.

[16]In an interview with Christopher Ricks in *The Listener*, 4 April 1979.

[17]See, for example, the crude innuendos in Cats's *Liefd en Vosse-Vel* cited in H. Lewandowski and P. J. van Dranen *Beschavings en Zedengeschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam: 1933) p. 283.

[18] *'t Amsterdamsche Hoerdom behelzende de listen en streecken, daar sich de Hoeren en Hoere-wardinnen van dienen; beneven der selve maniere van leven, dwaaze bygeloovigheden en in 't algemeen alles 't geen die dese Juffers in gebruyk is*, (Amsterdam: 1681) p. 257.

[19]Bernard de Mandeville, *A Modest Defence of Public Stews*

[20]This argument was repeated in *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Publick Benefits*, ed. D. Garman, (London: 1924) pp. 83-84.

[21]For direct evidence of the procedure and selectivity of these roundups, see the "Confessie Boeken" of the Rechterlijk Archief (judicial archives) of the Amsterdam Gemeente Archieven, where explicit accounts, as well as biographic detail concerning the prostitutes, their procuresses, past convictions, and origins, abounds.

[22]R. C. Bakhuizen van den Brink, L. Ph. C. van den Bergh, and Jhr. J. de Jonge, "De Baljuwen," *Het Nederlands Rijksarchief* (1857): 235-303. I am grateful to Dr. C. H. E. de Wit for bringing this important article to my attention.

[23]This *was* somewhat disingenuous of the *schutter* officers, since it was plain that by the 1650s their purpose was rather to display the attributes of status than to indulge in active defense exercises for the city. The *schutter* gallery of the Amsterdam Historical Museum supplies an illuminating iconographical transition from the severity of sixteenth century studies through to the ornate flamboyance of the later seventeenth.

[24]See, for example, William Carr, *A Description of Holland*, p. 25ff; and for many other views expressing the same opinion, Roelof Murris, *La Hollande et les Hollandais au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles vus par les Français* (Paris: 1925).

[25]Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth Century Lyon" (unpublished). I am very grateful to Professor Davis for letting me read a draft of this important essay.

[26]For the damage that economic severance of the Netherlands from Iberian suppliers could inflict, see J. L. Israel, "Spain and the Netherlands 1618-1648," *Past and Present* (1977): 30-74.

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[27]This comes from an eighteenth century English account (published in Leiden, in 1765), but it echoes many similar reactions in the previous century. See Murris, op. cit.

[28]The causes of the first Flood—associated in Dutch minds with their own potential nemesis—were often related to the sins of gluttony, luxury, lust, and drunkenness. For typical religious rhetoric on this subject see (J. Sceperius) *Bacchus: Den ouden en huydendaagschen Dronckeman, ontdaeckt uyt de Heydensche Historien onderrigt uyt de Heylige Schriften* (Gouda: 1665); *Bacchus Wonder Wercken waer in Het Recht Gebruyck en Misbruyck des Wijnsldoor verscheyden vermaeckelijcke eerlijcke en leerlijcke historien wort afgebeeld* (Amsterdam: 1628).

[29]*Acta der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid Holland* (ed. W. P. C. Knuttel) vol. i ('s Gravenhage: 1908) pp. 405-406.

[30]See H. K. Roessingh, *Inlandse Tabak, Expansie en contractie van een handelgewas in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Wageningen: 1976); see also Georg A. Brongers, *Nicotiana Tabacum: The History of Tobacco and Tobacco Smoking in the Netherlands* (Groningen: 1964).

[31]Cited in R. B. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam* vol. 2 (Amsterdam: 1967) p. 136.

[32]For the history of food in the Netherlands, see L. Burema, *De Voeding in Nederland van de Middeleeuwse tot de Twintigste Eeuw* (Assen: 1953).

[33]Parival, op. cit., p. 20.

[34]*Acta. . .* op. cit., vol. 3 ('s Gravenhage: 1910) pp. 536f., where the deliberations of the Overijssel and Utrecht synods are summarized for 1655–56.

[35]Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: 1978), pp. 178–204.

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MARY CATHERINE BATESON

"This Figure of Tinsel": A Study of Themes of Hypocrisy and Pessimism in Iranian Culture

> Come, Sufi, let us cast off the pious cloak of hypocrisy,
> And strike out and cancel this figure of tinsel.
>
> —Hafez

TRADITIONALLY, THE "WHITED SEPULCHER" (Matt. 23:27) was the paradigm of hypocrisy in Western culture: the concealed grave that looks clean and pure but actually contains corruption, so that it can pollute those who inadvertently come into contact with it. What is concealed by the hypocrite is traditionally uglier, dirtier, and more selfish than what he shows to the world, and in the Western tradition, the ugliness within is innate to the unregenerate personality. In general, then, hypocrisy was preferred to the expression of what it concealed and was condemned only because what society really demanded was an unrelenting effort by the public and acceptable self to colonize the secret and reprehensible self. The inside was to harmonize with the outside, not vice versa, and the civilizing of children involved an imposition of virtue, starting with externals and working inward.

More recently there has been in this country an increasing assertion of the fundamental innocence and wholesomeness of the inner self and its right to expression. Evil lies in the concealment itself, not in what is concealed. If the grave is opened and exposed to the air, the argument runs, corruption will be dissipated and what was concealed will be seen to be simple and natural. Harmony is to be achieved by letting the outside directly express the inside. Thus frankness and outspokenness are regarded by Americans as good, and honesty is preferred to kindness, tact, or prudence in the scale of virtues. This shift means, among other things, that people are less and less encouraged to conform outwardly—which provides the necessary predictability that makes social life possible—and that child rearing is a process of providing the tools of self expression.

Thus we have radically changed our view of hypocrisy within this century, as we have changed our view of the human individual and the topography of knowledge, learning, and expression, and the possible dissonances between them.[1] The concept of hypocrisy depends on theories of personality and moti-

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vation implicit in a culture, which vary from place to place and time to time. The intent of this paper is to present a tangle of issues related to hypocrisy and dissimulation as these are seen in Iranian culture,[2] which provides an interesting counterpoint to the Western view, and to highlight some of the moral issues involved and, more topically, the way in which a given theory of the relationship between inner feeling and perceptible expression contributes to the stability or instability of a society.

Iranians care deeply about sincerity. The ideal is someone in whom the exterior expresses the interior, who is not *dowru*, 'two-faced, hypocritical.'[3] At the same time, Iranians believe that much that is good and precious is concealed, and that the mask of conformity is not only used to conceal corruption but also to protect a secret virtue from the corrupting pressures of society. Little is what it seems: gold is likely to turn out to be gilt, and yet precious metal may also be protected under a concealing layer of base. This leads to a view that is more situational and relativistic than the Western one, for dissimulation, while never the ideal, is genuinely ambiguous in its moral value. The negative view is the commonest, for Iranians tend to look at others from the point of view referred to in Persian as *badbini*, literally 'seeing evil, suspicion, pessimism,' but often translated as cynicism, and this increases as the social context widens. Strangers and people with wealth or power are often assumed to be corrupt or hypocritical in their public virtue, and this goes with being shrewd, calculating, and opportunistic. Obsequious flattery, ostentatious virtue, and insincerity are the source of undeserved and unearned wealth and influence. Iranians will condemn whole categories of fellow Iranians on all of these counts, so that they combine to form a standardized critique or stereotype.[4] In reference to themselves and to their intimates, however, Iranians imply the belief that virtue and purity may be concealed, awaiting expression, or may be served by dissimulation. This model is in sharp contrast with both the old and the new models in the Western tradition.

Iranian culture explicitly accepts certain types of deception and dissimulation. To begin with, the values of kindness, courtesy, and hospitality stand higher in many contexts than the values of frankness and honesty. Why tell the truth when feelings will be hurt? Why, indeed, linger on painful truths? Even deaths in the family may be concealed when circumstances are not conducive to informing the bereaved tactfully and supportively. It is important to note that this is not a case where honesty is not valued but where, given a certain type of dilemma in which honesty will cause pain, a kind deception is preferred—which would not be regarded as a lie, for real lies are very much condemned.

Further, Shiite Islam stands alone, among major religious traditions that emphasize the truth or falsehood of beliefs (most notably Christianity and Islam), in allowing the believer to conceal his belief for his own self-protection. This tradition of *taqiya* (or *ketmān*) developed, of course, in an Islamic context, where it was a question of concealing from fellow Muslims, when the majority was Sunni, that one was a Shiite, not of denying Islam. Interview questions about *taqiya* elicited examples that cut close to issues of general morality, however. The principle of *taqiya*, for instance, might be used to excuse a good man who, upon seeing his colleague accept a bribe, did not comment or denounce him and apparently accepted the standards of the majority. The acceptance of

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taqiya suggests that a pointless martyrdom is not incumbent upon an honest man, although martyrdom in an effective defense of the truth would be.

In all of these cases, dissimulation is a response to external forces, which may be negatively conceived, and goodness lies within—an inversion of the Western situation where hypocrisy conceals something ugly. Indeed, in Iranian folk psychology, although evil may run in families, people are not in general inclined naturally to evil or innately depraved. The main source of evil is in social life; it comes from without, not from within. Children are, on the whole, innocent, and adults interpret their behavior on this basis whenever possible. Thus, when a child knocks over and breaks something or misbehaves in a way that an American would regard as a clear attempt "to get attention," Iranian adults excuse it as accidental. Little boys may accompany their mothers to the baths; or children may listen with avid interest to the conversations of adults who believe that children have neither prurient interest nor understanding. In the words of a popular song, "children have no dissimulation," and this is good, because the single self they express is good.

There are a multitude of contexts in Iranian culture in which what is concealed and covered is purer and finer than what can be seen from outside. Religious texts, for instance, have an exoteric meaning (*zāher*) and an esoteric meaning (*bāten*), and the esoteric meaning, which requires seeing through the exterior, is the higher one. (It is interesting to contrast the ways in which a mystic and a psychologically oriented literary critic study a text, each seeking a secret and hidden meaning on the basis of different assumptions about what kind of thing is naturally secret and hidden.)

Again, the goodness and innocence of women are preserved by concealing them. Women, while not intrinsically evil, are corruptible, and therefore must be protected. Seclusion and the veil are not regarded as concealing something ugly and offensive but as concealing something precious that is to be kept unsullied, even though both also secondarily protect men from temptations and distractions. This, incidentally, is a misunderstanding that lies behind many discussions of the veil between Muslims and non-Muslims, who make the assumption that to conceal something is a mark of disesteem. Houses, similarly, traditionally turned drab faces outward, with high concealing walls, while within, the welcome visitor found the green garden and warm hospitality.

For all kinds of reasons, then, the externally visible may differ from what lies within, but passive concealment is only one kind of difference; often a more elaborate mask is necessary. The opinions of others must be considered and substantial effort put into keeping up appearances. Thus a front must be created for acquaintances who pass within the garden wall and yet are not trusted members of an inner circle, and the creation of such a front may require engrossing effort. Within the drab walls there are elaborate reception rooms, which differ from the informal living quarters of the family farther in, whose maintenance requires coordinated and sustained effort and expense to protect the family's corporate *āb-e ru*, its 'public respectability.' Affluence has tended to increase the elaboration of this semipublic front, and the need to maintain it is seen as a principal source of greed, profiteering, and corruption.

At this point the discussion becomes as complex as an onion. At the center of the personality there is, ideally, a core of goodness, or at least of potential goodness, and this is hidden to conceal it from corrupting social influences, the

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most important of which perhaps is envy. But social life is a necessity, as are interactions with individuals outside the inner circle, and in fact one of the by-products of modernization is a pressure to interact with more and more people, most of them strangers. This runs very much against traditional preferences and brings out the worst in all parties.

Relationships with nonintimates are governed by conventions of courtesy. The stylized patterns of thanking and deprecating, greeting and offering, and the elegant phrases that accompany them have an aesthetic value that gives to their performance a certain pleasure. Ritual courtesy (*taārof*) affirms basic values and represents a visible claim to virtues such as generosity and humility, and yet there is a certain ambivalence that surrounds it. For one thing, the courtesies are used too publicly and in relation to too many people for the underlying feelings to be always there, and yet they must be used, for social pressures dictate that the courtesies be preserved for the sake of *āb-e ru*. Furthermore, ostentatious humility suggests its opposite, and ostentatious generosity is often palpably aggressive, as the flagging guest is given yet another plateful of sweets. Iranians today often use the word *taārof* almost as a synonym for hypocrisy and enact their ritual courtesies with the disclaimer, "This is not a *taārof* " (I really mean it). An excessive external show may be hypocritical *tazāhor*, an acting out of what is absent within.

In spite of this ambivalence, there are ways of achieving a sense of harmony between inner and outer, and these can be illustrated by looking at the circumstances under which the rituals of *taārof* are either experienced as sincere or laid aside.

Some examples may be helpful. Suppose that I am walking down my own street near sundown; I meet a neighbor whom I do not know well standing at her doorway, and we greet each other. Routinely, I will be invited in, and if I do enter, I will be offered food in addition to the obligatory cup of tea and perhaps urged to stay for a meal. Since I know that to accept would be an imposition, I probably will not enter, and if I do, I will refuse the continued urgings to accept more with profuse thanks, and go on my way. Again, if I admire something in a friend's house, he or she may offer it to me, but I will refuse to accept it, although the ritual of offer and refusal with thanks may last many minutes. Similar graceful byplay will surround a quarrel between diners about the paying of a check in a restaurant and even the sequence with which people pass through a doorway. A conversation with the driver while riding in an uncrowded taxicab may cause his sense of being a host to overbalance his sense of performing a commercial service, leading to his saying at fare time, "Be my guest" (*befarmāid*). The passenger will of course insist on paying, adding a little extra in appreciation of the gift of hospitality, and go on his way cheered.

Iranians deny there is any *necessary* behavior in such situations. Apparently, this openness is the criterion of sincerity. They concede that usually one should not accept certain invitations or offers, but they insist that one *may* do so. The actual outcome is not believed to be fully determined by canons of politeness, although observation suggests that in fact it is, in all of these cases. However, it is possible to manipulate the *taārof* situation to eliminate that freedom, and then the *taārof* will be hypocritical and unsatisfying.

Thus the manner of offering may be such that the ordinary pleasure of offering and refusing with thanks is lost. For instance, *taārof-e khoshk*, 'dry *taārof*,'

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is sterile and unrefreshing, somewhat like the way an Englishman says to his guests, "Do come again," as they leave, according to one Iranian. The invitation or offer is made in a way that makes it clear it is no more than a social formality; there is no possibility of believing it is meant sincerely. Again, the "*taārof* of Shah Abdolazim" is one that cannot be accepted or that would commit the guest in some undesirable way. The person who issues the invitation is looking to his own advantage, perhaps by inviting you in a lavish and exaggerated way when he knows you are committed elsewhere. The term ostensibly refers to a certain shah, but an alternative explanation sometimes given is that in the town of Shah Abdolazim, famous for yoghurt, all the yoghurt sellers urge you to have a taste, but if you do, having thus broken the skin of the yoghurt, you are committed to buy.

The sincerity of *taārof*, then, depends on preserving a certain element of unpredictability. It involves a real exchange, not the exchange expressed by words, but rather an exchange involving a degree of risk and trust. When this is absent, the *taārof* is indeed hypocritical. The paradigm situation is one in which A has offered more than he can conveniently give and B must show restraint in accepting it. In effect, A has given B the opportunity to refrain from injuring him. B will usually give more in return than the negative offering of restraint—for instance, he will give thanks for the gift he has not accepted and was not expected to accept. A sincere *taārof* conveys a measure of trust because it involves a certain risk or the acceptance of vulnerability in relation to the other, who must then show self-restraint.

This paradoxical quality, in which the actual offer is not meant to be accepted but in which the offering conveys a real message about the quality of the relationship, is directly parallel to a type of ritual that has been described for many species by animal ethologists. In these rituals, intraspecific conflict is halted by a display of total vulnerability on the part of the weaker that inhibits aggression on the part of the stronger. Displayed vulnerability is based on the certainty that it will not be exploited: a wolf may bare his throat to a stronger wolf, confirming his dominance but preventing his attack. Much of Iranian social ritual has exactly this paradoxical quality, where one individual ritually displays weakness and humility that obligates the other, or makes an offer that the other acknowledges but cannot accept, and so it is no wonder that this ritual is surrounded by ambivalence. A host may say to a guest *nowkaret am*, 'I am your servant,' but the exact phrase occurs as the equivalent of "crying uncle" in street fighting and in formal wrestling. As in many paradoxes, the messages are not contradictory because they occur at different logical levels. The apparent message "You are welcome to impose on me, injure me, cheat me of my livelihood" is not true, but it carries the metamessage "Because I trust you not to do so, I can say . . ." This is *taārof* at its best, and it is sad when Westerners, not accustomed to thinking of such complex relationships between inner and outer and between layers of meaning, dismiss it as hypocrisy; it is sadder yet when westernized Iranians follow them; for whenever inner and outer differ or are in tension, a resolution of that tension provides an additional dimension of meaning.

There are other ways of resolving the tension between the literal meaning of the external form and the underlying intention. For instance, there is a certain type of person who is often referred to as *darvish*, possessing some of the quali-

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ties associated with the traditional Sufi or dervish. This person accepts simply whatever he is given and offers whatever he has without fanfare; his behavior is modest and introverted, and he avoids situations calling for elaborate courtesy or acknowledgment of status. If someone is known to be *darvish*, he is respected rather than regarded as ill-mannered. His external behavior expresses directly his inner attitude. Where the *darvish* person is like this all the time, most people are like this only in their closest relationships, for intimacy is marked by lack of ceremonial, a rather brusque taking for granted of anything the other might offer, combined with restraint in taking it. An encounter in which ceremonial hospitality is waived (I stop at a friend's house to talk briefly and succeed in persuading him that I've just had tea and don't want any) is a step towards intimacy. Thus the existence of a complex ceremonial system creates the possibility of communicating by not observing the ritual. Omitting ritual, which is not itself necessarily insincere, supplies the metamessage of sincerity.

Not surprisingly, just as there are those who achieve sincerity by saying what they mean, there are those who achieve it by meaning what they say—that is, by the literal acting out of the rhetoric of courtesy. The *luti* is apparently the opposite of the *darvish*, flamboyant and extroverted, the traditional chivalrous tough who defends the weak in his territory. He means every word of his *taārof*. He really will sell the coat off his back to entertain an unexpected guest and will insist until the guest gives in. Indeed, such a person may lock the door and pocket the key until his guest agrees to stay. He also takes the *taārof* of others literally, and may show up with his friends at the rich merchant's house and empty his larder and his pocketbook.

Oddly enough, informants readily recognize the similarity between the *luti* and the *darvish* and are quick to associate them in terms of the trait *safā-ye bāten*, literally 'internal purity,' but more freely, integrity or sincerity. Both types are respected, but at the same time they are a little pitied, because neither is expected to make a great success of life. They have dealt with the tension of the difference between inner and outer in a way that is less flexible and less nuanced than the usual rich and ambivalent way in which the offer of a meal which is not eaten is sweet and conveys a benison.

The *luti* and the *darvish* as ideal ways of transcending ambiguity recur in Iranian imagery. Individuals seem to believe that, deep within their personalities, there resides the simplicity and purity of the *darvish*, and they express this through references to a diffuse spirituality, by quoting poetry, and by nostalgic statements about the simple life. They also seem to believe that, like the *luti*, they are in some relationships and in some situations completely unstinting and uncalculating, expressing directly what they feel. Thus there is a range of situations in which strong emotion is expected to break through social dissimulation. However, just as formal courtesy is structured to allow for sincerity, so also strong emotion can be ritualized.

Grief for the dead, for instance, is an emotion that is deemed to require full expression, and the suppression of grief is deplored. The bereaved are supposed to be completely carried away, throwing ashes and dirt on their heads, and wailing. The common remark that Westerners do not really feel things as deeply as do Iranians is often supported by some story of a foreigner's stoic behavior when there was a death in his family. Someone who suppresses his grief is not

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respected—he is less of a person for it. On the other hand, the expression of grief at funerals is inevitably ritualized: at key words and key moments there are fluctuations in the audible weeping, and there is a convention that one should weep a little even if one had not been close to the deceased.

The tension between the kind of sincerity expressed in giving way to strong emotion, where powerful inner feelings simply burst out of the individual, and the socially required simulation of such emotions is complicated by the fact that Iranians have learned how to weep under appropriate ritual arousal. However, one should not explore the sincerity or hypocrisy of ritualized weeping without bearing in mind the partial truth that acting *as if* one has a certain feeling may bring that feeling into being and, on the other hand, the actor's technique of recalling emotion from another context in order to produce a convincing performance. Again, we see a two-way traffic between visible expression and what underlies it.

One of the principal religious activities of Shiite Islam, the form commonest in Iran, is mourning for the death of the Imams, Muhammad's descendants through his daughter Fatimah, who, it is believed, inherited the leadership of the community and were persecuted by the majority Sunnis. Weeping for the death of the Imams gives religious merit and will cause the one for whom you weep to intercede in your favor at the last judgment. Meetings and dramatizations are held at which, interspersed with prayers and singing, the stories of the deaths are retold, and all present weep: they sob or moan and tears flow freely, especially at key evocative points and phrases in the narrative. Sessions of ritual mourning *(rowzeh)* may last several hours, with weeping at varying intensities combined with head and chest beating.

At such meetings, my companions cheerfully expect to weep and half expect me to weep as well, for they feel the stories of the deaths of the Imams, especially the martyrdom of Husayn, are so tragic, that weeping would be a natural (i.e., not necessarily ritual) response. Yet there is a mood of communal effort for greater weeping, with the leader, often a member of the clergy, urging them on. Informants compare the skill of different leaders in eliciting response and sometimes speak of the *rowzeh* as a sort of mental hygiene, like "having a good cry": one described his grandmother, when she felt depressed, as saying, "How I wish I could go to a good *rowzeh* and cry." Tissues may be passed before the ceremony, and at a private women's *rowzeh* in a wealthy house, ornate tissue holders spaced around the room are part of the furnishing; afterward, a maid comes around with a ewer of rosewater. Between sessions, cheerful, unsubdued gossip prevails, but when the session begins anew, weeping takes only five or ten seconds to get going, although it does increase gradually. There are even some happy rituals that involve brief references to sad events,[5] where participants may stop and weep immediately and briefly for a few seconds and then return to the cheerful mood of the occasion.

How sincere is all this strong emotion? Ritual weeping in Iran is apparently "method" weeping: it depends on a skill in emotional arousal, not just on the ability to produce tears, and this in turn depends on arriving at a certain maturity and complexity of emotion, not expected of children. Yet the distinction between real, uncontrollable weeping and ritual weeping is usually clear: for one thing, children are not unduly worried by their mother's sobs, and indeed

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play games of *rowzeh*, although they do not themselves weep during the ceremonies. Also, occasionally I have seen a woman who has been recently bereaved carried away by her own grief during a ritual mourning ceremony, and this is disruptive beyond a certain point, although informants agree that all of life's griefs lie behind their ritual weeping.

The connection between ritualized expressions of emotion and the interest in personal emotion overcoming the dividedness of calculation and dissimulation provides a potent political weapon. In effect, the nostalgia for sincerity and the sense that most of life is lived in a state of compromise with a corrupting society can be transformed into a readiness to put lives on the line for idealistic reasons, and this readiness can be organized into public expression. During 1978 and, to a lesser degree, in other periods of protest, the build-up of popular opposition to the regime was almost entirely structured around occasions of public mourning, starting with the funerals of those actually killed in protests—which were then commemorated, as is customary, on the seventh day, the fortieth day, and the anniversary—and later, with the commemorations of the Shiite martyrdoms, especially the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in the month of Muharram. This sequence of mourning ceremonies sets a rhythm, accelerating toward consummation, for each time crowds march through the streets there is the likelihood of new incidents and new deaths. The private grief of people actually bereaved is picked up and made a public matter, and the same clergy who specialize in evoking ritual tears can act as cheerleaders to fan the expression of strong feeling, bringing it into being. Private and therefore sincere emotion gradually extends its authority to the crowd, becoming public property, and the external sharing of shouts and tears becomes internal rage and grief. When people are swept up in popular protest, they feel a certain joy in the strength of their outrage, as if for the first time in their lives they are not divided.

It seems probable that the thematic understanding of the relationship between inner and outer in Iranian culture has interacted throughout history with autocratic forms of government that forced the concealment of individual convictions and the elaboration of external forms; yet the interest in hidden purity, as expressed in these many different areas, seems too basic to be an artifact of a form of government or a tradition of police surveillance. The cultivated consciousness of dissonance between inner and outer, in which influences from society are the source of evil and corruption, seems to transcend political externals, and yet it cannot but influence political developments.

The most obvious effect of the sense of dissonance between inner and outer and the nostalgia for bringing them together is clearly a certain volatility. Both the conformity enforced by political suppression and the conformity that makes a broad social life possible are attended by discomfort, a romantic yearning for the breakthrough of costly and euphoric nonconformity. Iranian autocracy does not conform to the classic European authoritarian model that assumes authoritarian control is necessary to prevent the expression of innate viciousness. Instead, it is based on a pessimistic view of the possibility of maintaining innate innocence in broader society, for as soon as large and complex social units are concerned, Iranian *badbini* reasserts itself.

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Thus when a given position becomes fashionable or advantageous, the sincerity of those who hold it becomes suspect: anyone who is successful is probably not sincere but opportunistic, calculating, and hypocritical. Trust is fragile, and the success of any political movement creates the context for cynicism. Where a leader manages to secure trust in his integrity, this trust is so demanding that he may have no room to maneuver at all. The same brittleness can be observed in friendship where high expectations combined with pessimism leave people always vulnerable to disillusionment and betrayal. Alternatively, of course, the leader may be martyred before he meets the nemesis of popular cynicism, for martyrdom is the natural outcome when true virtue is confronted by society, and Shiites emphasize the martyrdom of every single one of the Imams, beginning with Muhammad himself (those who apparently died natural deaths were actually poisoned). So strong is this logic that, whenever a prominent individual who is still trusted and admired dies, he is assumed to have been murdered, an assumption that resonates with other kinds of paranoia.

Thus Iranian concepts of the nature of integrity and the dangers of corruption and hypocrisy produce a tendency toward autocratic government by undermining popular trust and consensus. Any society that attributes evil to social life and expects to find goodness hidden deep within the individual has a proclivity for anarchy. Public virtue and conformity that make social life possible may indeed be based on diverse and inconsistent motivations, and yet any ongoing social order must learn to support virtue as publicly defined, whether it is hypocritical or not. In Iran, the play of inner and outer winds through the enigmas of social life, with generous courtesy and ardent sincerity balancing prudential concealment and dissimulation. At the same time, the elaboration of the difference between inner and outer provides a fundamental and ongoing source of instability, as society is perpetually liable to be turned not upside down but inside out. No public virtues can be stabilized if public approbation immediately evokes the suspicion that these are insincere; yet no complex society can be constructed only on that private virtue that is cultivated in the heart and with one's closest intimates; and no society can be effectively led if the only proof of a leader's sincerity is that he receive no social benefit from his leadership.

REFERENCES

[1]See, *Childhood in Contemporary Cultures*, ed. M. Mead and M. Wolfenstein, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1955).

[2]My own interest in this issue is derived from a study, undertaken some years ago with a group of Iranian and American colleagues, of various related issues: categories of interpersonal relationships, the formation of trust, and the selection of certain character traits as admirable while others are condemned. The only joint publication of the research group was an article "Ṣafā-yi Bāṭin: A Study of the Interrelations of a Set of Iranian Ideal Character Types," by M. C. Bateson, J. W. Clinton, J. B. M. Kassarjian, H. Safavi, and M. Soraya, in *Psychological Dimensions of Near Eastern Studies*, ed. L. C. Brown and N. Itzkowitz (The Darwin Press, Princeton, N.J.: 1977), pp. 257–274. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of this group to this article as well as to my other papers and publications on Iranian national character without, however, holding them responsible for the errors.

[3]Since most of the readers of this journal are not orientalists, a highly simplified transcription has been used that reflects pronunciation rather than orthography.

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[4]This negative stereotype occurs in Western writing also, as argued by Ali Banuazizi in "Iranian National Character: A Critique of Some Western Perspectives," in Brown and Itzkowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-239. However, Western observers have sometimes regarded this stereotype as true, whereas here it is presented as a stylized area of cultural concern. See also Marvin Zonis, *The Political Elite of Iran* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.: 1971).

[5]"The marriage of the daughter of Qoreysh."

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STEPHEN GILMAN

The Case of Diego Alonso: Hypocrisy and the Spanish Inquisition

THE NARRATIVE THAT FOLLOWS is composed of translated excerpts from the record of a sixteenth century trial, and explanatory comments of my own. It may be of interest to readers of the present issue of *Daedalus* not only because of the fascinating and, to us, outlandish events therein described, but also because it is the most extreme example of hypocrisy I have ever encountered—and, given my age and my profession, I think I can claim to have encountered a good many. Today most people tend to think of the Spanish Inquisition in terms of Voltaire and Edgar Allen Poe: mystery, torture, rapacity, fanaticism, merciless legal murder, all accompanied by efficiently cold blood. However, as is manifest in its pretense that it did not punish those condemned but rather turned them over for that purpose to the "secular arm," it was also the most hypocritical of all possible institutions. The well-advertised interest of multinational oil companies in environmental protection is in comparison a childish masquerade.

Thus the Spanish Inquisition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has a special historical quality as compared to its medieval European predecessors.[1] One could say its phenomenal strength and endurance resided in its very capacity for hypocrisy. What was new about it was representation and justification of a theatrical society devoted to role playing, to the appearance of honor, to ostensive prayer, and to all the other forms of self-masking that are unmasked in *La Celestina*, the *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and the *Quijote*, to mention only works known outside of Spain. Which is to say, the Inquisition was not just accepted, but indeed fervently worshipped (Lope de Vega called it a "sacred foot" before which he prostrated himself), insofar as the grim festivals of the autos-de-fe simultaneously fed upon and nourished the collective hypocrisy of the population that attended them. Everybody knew that Ferdinand the Catholic had a *marrano* quartering (with the result that the royal family itself was, as they said at the time, stained), and given the enormous number of frightened or forced conversions that followed the pogroms of 1394, nobody could be absolutely sure of his or her own ancestry.[2] One could only ignore the past or hide it, and above all, applaud vigorously the condemnation of those who got caught, along with the institution that had caught them. The rats pretending to be cats formed a ratcatcher's fan club.

However, the story I am about to tell has less to do with Spain's strange sociological aberrance and the ironical literary masterpieces it engendered (irony, a form of dissimulation that seeks complicity, is hypocrisy's nonidentical

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twin)[3] than with the way sham permeated the inner operation of the institution. But before penetrating into what the Inquisitors themselves called *el secreto* (the "secret" at the core of hypocrisy),[4] I should perhaps explain how I happened to encounter this particular trial record and why I requested a transcript to be made of it. While preparing a study of the life and times of Fernando de Rojas (a member of a family of converted Jews and the author of the greater part of *La Celestina*), I took the trouble to glance at other cases assigned to the court-appointed lawyer who defended his father-in-law on a charge of disbelief in the hereafter. Most of those I skimmed in the National Archives in Madrid were irrelevant for my purposes, but this one struck me as crying out for remembrance as a potentially classic tale of injustice, imprisonment, and escape. And then, once it was transcribed and I was able to read it closely (my paleographic skills are amateurish and sixteenth century *letra procesal* devilish), I realized its possible historical importance.

On the 6th of November, 1513, an evening mass was being celebrated in that chapel of the Cathedral of Toledo known as *de los reyes nuevos*. It was a vivid setting: these so-called new kings were the bastard Henry of Trastamara (who was crowned in 1369 after stabbing his half-brother, Peter the Cruel, to death) and his wife; their funeral chapel with its painted period figures still today resembles nothing so much as a three-dimensional hand of face cards: king, queen, and several jacks. The priest "was a skinny tall old man" named Estéban de Vargas, who must have been at least eighty years old. It was cold and very drafty, and while the priest was praying, "eyes half closed," a witness saw the host "blowing through the air along the altar." The result was that, when the moment for communion arrived, it was nowhere to be found. This was a very serious matter, not only because of ceremonial impropriety, but also because it was generally believed at the time that, if a consecrated wafer fell into the hands of heretics, it could be used for all sorts of blasphemous magic. Indeed, poor Father Vargas "upon discovering that the corpus christi was missing, was so upset and stricken that it was a wonder to watch him."

A self-proclaimed "Old Christian" witness to the affair (whose testimony is recorded in the initial inquisitional investigation of the loss) goes on to describe the thoroughness of the search. Father Vargas began by "putting on his glasses" (an impressive gesture at the time) and then questioning those present if they knew what had become of it. Upon learning that it had been blown about by the draft, he proceeded to remove the altar cloths with the help of "a young bachellor [lawyer] with closely curled blond hair[5] dressed as a layman in a black tabard," who held a candle for him. The host was nowhere to be seen, and the search party proceeded to disrobe the priest, who was all bundled up, to shake his clothing, and even "to look inside the slippers he had on his feet."

The next step was to dismantle the wooden altar itself and the stairs leading up to it, and upon so doing, it became evident that "mice had been running about underneath it as is their disposition to do." Questioned further about this, the witness stated that he had observed "some mice walking about the aforesaid chapel but that he had not seen one on the altar during the aforesaid mass." However, when it was the turn of the "curly blond lawyer," Diego Alonso, to testify, he remembered having noticed at the foot of the retable "a piece of a host

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about the size of a small coin that appeared to have been nibbled at the edges by mice." This was not mentioned by the other witnesses (although they all confirm that the chapel was rodent infested), and during his later trial the statement may have made him seem all the more guilty. As we shall see, it was his misfortune to have happened to be the one person present who was known "to be of the lineage of converted Jews." But at that moment, although the seed of suspicion had been sown, all that occurred was that the altar was reconstructed and Father Vargas put back on his slippers and his cassock and finished the mass without the host, "and with pain in his heart and disorder in his spirit."

In what the French would term the *panier de crabes* of sixteenth century Toledan society, such an incident was not soon forgotten, and it is apparent from the testimony of later witnesses that Diego Alonso was henceforth closely observed. Then in December 1514, or perhaps in January 1515 (the witness who recalled neighborhood gossip about the matter was imprecise), the worst possible blow fell. An apparently candid local parish priest concocted what must have seemed to him a harmless and uplifting tale of a minor miracle of the sort that had circulated throughout Christian Europe for centuries. A parishioner of his—he recounted to others of them—had told him in confession

> that he had stolen a host from a certain place and he had carried it in his bosom for a few days and, while thus carrying it there in his bosom, it seemed to him that everybody could see it under his clothes and, after worrying for some time about what to do with it, he decided to burn it, and he did burn it, because the Inquisition had burned a close and beloved relative of his, saying, "On your account, Jesus Christ, they burned so-and-so, so I am going to burn you." And after he had burned it, the odor that remained in the room amazed and frightened him by its sweetness.

The thief was indeed so panic-stricken and so suddenly convinced of the truth of Christian doctrine, that he decided to confess his sin.

What followed is not clear, but it seems reasonable to guess that somebody, after hearing the pious story, warned the priest that he had no power of absolution in cases of heresy and that his duty was to report what he had been told to the Inquisition. This he immediately decided to do, but there was one problem: obviously, if the story had really been true, he should have reported it immediately. Therefore, in order to excuse himself to the Inquisitors, he added a further embellishment: the repentant sinner, he said, "had claimed he could be absolved because it was not a case of heresy but rather of blasphemy, since, when he had burned the host, he had believed it to be a sacrament." But, even so, the priest went on to say, he had continued to doubt whether he was so empowered. Therefore, without revealing the sinner's identity (which would have violated confessional secrecy), he had finally come to ask the Inquisitors for advice. What the innocent old troublemaker did not realize is that, when the Inquisitors heard what he had come about, they made him repeat his story after having concealed "a court reporter in a hollow place in the chimney covered by a curtain." Every word was taken down and would be read later at the secret trial. Shortly thereafter, Diego Alonso was arrested.

By this time the whole affair was public property, and public opinion had decided unhesitatingly that the accused must have been the guilty party. The

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dates of the interrupted mass and the confessor's tale fitted; an uncle of Alonso's had recently been burned; and as the only person known to be of Jewish blood present when the host was lost, he was already under suspicion. Furthermore, after his arrest there surfaced two other items of circumstantial evidence. One witness remarked that the distinction between blasphemy and heresy could only have been drawn by a "person of letters." And another fair-weather friend "who had had much conversation with the accused" and "who had spent many pleasurable hours with him at *fiestas*, considering him to be reasonable, wise, cheerful and talkative," told the Inquisitors that he had observed a change in him after the fatal mass. Alonso had become "pensive, touchy, unreasonable, and excitable." Futhermore, "he got angry when gambling, played badly, and talked wildly." And why not, one is tempted to ask, since from other evidence it would appear that everybody in town was whispering about him?

As he recalled it later, Diego Alonso's state of mind after his arrest was even more erratic and irrational than that observed by others when he was merely under suspicion:

> As a result of the great passion and sadness I felt I was all unstrung and my common sense disturbed. Not only the fact of my imprisonment but just learning about the unspeakable and abominable deed of which I am accused caused me so much anguish that I lost all sense and judgment.

Indeed, so frenzied was he, that he compounded his presumed guilt by contriving a futile escape. Using an evening candle and a mutton bone, he managed to char and eventually whittle through the gate of the wooden grating behind which he was confined. The next problem was pulling his foot free of its chain, which he managed to accomplish with great pain and a deeply bruised heel. However, he hurt himself far more gravely when, after squeezing through a window and crawling across rooftops, he jumped into an enclosed yard, which caused him "so much agony in his body that he could not rise."

Eventually, disguised in his hooded cape, Alonso was able to crawl two hours slowly and painfully to the portal of a neighbor whom he knew. There he pretended to be a traveler from Valladolid who, upon arrival, had suddenly been taken ill, and as a result he was received charitably, first by the servants (who provided him with sugar candy), and afterwards by the householder (who provided him with a mattress). However, when the latter finally discovered the identity of his uninvited guest, he lost no time in informing the Holy Office. Upon being taken away, Alonso did prevail upon his acquaintance to inform a friendly lawyer of his plight, but the gesture was useless. The lawyer is reported to have replied: " 'That luckless one; you did well to turn him in, for otherwise it would have been the worse for you,' and he went on to ask half-laughing, 'How can I consult with him, since those gentlemen won't let me?' "[6]

Crippled, recaptured, and abandoned, Diego Alonso set himself to the task of preparing his defense. His initial reply to the charges written in July 1515 reveals that, in accordance with their usual practice, the Inquisitors had bolstered their principal accusation with such vague secondary charges as "carnal access to women of a prohibited degree of relationship"; activities revelatory of crypto-Judaism (failure to confess regularly, absence from mandatory ceremonies, eating meat "without need to do so on days when it was prohibited");

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slandering the Holy Office; and concealing knowledge of the infractions of others. To which he replied, as so many exasperated and scared fellow intellectuals had already done and were to do for centuries,[7] that these subsidiary indictments admitted no rebuttal, because they were "confused, obscure, and nonspecific." Hypocrisy and stupidity together made an unbeatable combination. If, indeed, as a child living with his parents, he had obeyed the older "law," he had already confessed to so doing, and had been pardoned (or "reconciled," in Inquisitional jargon). Since reaching "the age of discretion," he had scrupulously conformed to everything "the Holy Mother Church commands"—which was doubtless true, whether because of conviction or pardonable prudence.

Alonso then addressed himself to the principal charge: as for stealing and burning a host, "he would have had to lose his mind before even contemplating such an ugly and scandalous [read 'dangerous'] deed," for, as he was to say in his more formal rebuttal (written with the assistance of his lawyer a year later), "no reasonable person would perpetrate or even imagine such a thing." His accusers—he surmises—must have been either relatives or colleagues of Father Vargas, who, "given his age and infirmity," should not have been allowed to officiate." Afraid that he might lose his lucrative post as a result of losing the host, "they laid the blame on me, because I am defenseless and without influence."

At this point he directs his words to the Inquisitors themselves and proclaims with indignant eloquence:

> I charge to your consciences all the harm you are doing to the honor of God and to the honor of faithful Christians, among which, although a sinner, I count myself. And all for the sake of certain priests, advanced in age, feeble of memory, indecisive, and tottering, who, if they are not young enough to celebrate mass, should not be allowed to celebrate it. And in places where there are holes and hiding places which naturally invite such accidents, the blame which should be placed on such priests should not be imputed to faithful Christians. . . . The witnesses who have testified against me are not true Catholics, since they are malevolent and inimical to those whom they call *conversos*, judging all of them to be bad including the majority of good Catholic Christians among them.

As he had said earlier in the same statement,

> Those who recognized errors and sins should be thanked and well treated and not insulted and humiliated with evil sounding slurs—not to speak of their descendants. . . . Indeed, one can name few lineages in which no sinners are to be found.

The legal maneuvers that follow (for example, a questionnaire prepared for exculpatory witnesses) contain many interesting professional, sociological, and even folkloric details, but they are irrelevant to our present concerns. However, on the 10th of October, 1515, Diego Alonso, who apparently had recovered not only his forensic rhetoric but also his legal acumen, introduced a new factor into his defense that should be fully comprehended. He was called once again for interrogation by the Inquisitors who, as usual, opened the session by admonishing him to confess everything he had done "to offend God and our Holy Catholic Faith." His reply did not consist, as it had on previous occasions, of a protestation of innocence. Rather, he said

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> that he gave license and faculty to any and all priests who might know anything about the case, whether from confession or not, freely and without incurring any of the penalties prescribed and established by the Holy Mother Church [for violation of confessional secrecy] to repeat to your Reverences anything that he had said.

If the priest (whose identity naturally was unknown to him)[8] who had told the story of the miraculous odor would tell the truth—at least to the extent of affirming that it was not he who had made the fatal and miraculous confession—he would be absolved.

The Inquisitors took their time in responding to this challenge, but finally, on the 7th of March of the following year, they did summon the priest in question, who, fortunately for Diego Alonso, was still alive. After the situation was explained to him, he took the oath and declared

> that the aforesaid licentiate never confessed such a thing nor had he communicated with the witness in person or through anyone else in the confessional or otherwise. And that the person concerning whom the present witness had come to consult with the Inquisitors some two years earlier in connection with the burning of the Holy Sacrament was not Diego Alonso as he could now certify to your Reverences. And that it was not the Holy Sacrament that was lost in this city that was burned. [Furthermore, the person in question] was not a resident of this city, and the aforesaid matter had occurred some 25 leagues distant from this city.

On the 22nd of November, Diego Alonso, hoping (or perhaps having heard that)[9] the priest had testified to his innocence, asked the Inquisitors for an audience, which was granted. They asked him what he wanted to say, and he began by reminding them of his previous permission to reveal his confessional secrets. This must have alarmed them, and even more so when Alonso then revealed that he knew it was a member of the secular clergy who had fabricated the story. They asked him who his confessors were, and when they learned they were only *religiosos* (i.e., the regular clergy), they quickly granted his petition for immediate resolution of his case. If the parish priest was talking about his second visit and his sworn statement as to the innocence of the accused, both their delay in questioning the former (five months) and in releasing the latter afterwards (eight months) could be very embarrassing.

The "trial" (actually the judgment) was therefore held with surprising celerity (given the glacierlike nature of the institution) less than three weeks later on the 11th of December. Those present were three Inquisitors—Francisco de Herrera, Sancho Vélez, and Juan de Mendoza—Brother Bernardo Manrique, a theologian of the Order of Saint Dominic, residing in the monastery of Saint Peter the Martyr; the Licentiate Alfonso de Salvaterra, the Lord Mayor of Toledo; and the Licentiate Paniagua and Doctor Martínez, "both of them lawyers and residents of Toledo." I have listed the names and titles for two reasons: first, the unaccustomed inclusion of outsiders on the panel indicates the perilous gravity of the case in that it seems to have been an effort to enlist the collaboration and support of the local power structure; second, in order that the reader will be able to follow the voting process—always bearing in mind that all those assembled knew perfectly well that Alonso was innocent.

The first to vote was the Licentiate Paniagua who stressed (as all the others were to do) the criminality of the escape attempt, and recommended that the

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accused be absolved only if he could find fifteen Old Christians willing to support him under oath as religious character witnesses (*compurgadores*, or, in the scribe's attempt at Latin, *fidei zelatores*). "And if he should not find a sufficient number (*defecerit*) let him be turned over to the 'secular arm.' " The use of such witnesses was not infrequent, but this relatively large number can only represent a desire to utilize a curious and negative way of testing public opinion.

Doctor Martínez, on the other hand, recommended torture in the hope of extracting a confession that would justify conviction. He did not say so explicitly, but the point seems to have been that, if Alonso could be forced to admit that he had stolen the host that had been lost in the "Capilla de los Reyes Nuevos," the priest's story would then become irrelevant and the Inquisition's reputation unsullied. And, should Alonso hold fast, the religious character witness option would still be open. However, Doctor Martínez was willing to reduce the number to twelve. The Mayor and Fray Bernardo both agreed, although the former thought ten witnesses would be enough, while the latter specified that the torture should be extremely severe (*se debe de atormentar reciamente*).

It was now the turn of the Inquisitors, and the first two, Mendoza and Sancho Vélez, agreeing on the need for torture, seemed to be as worried about their superior officers as about public opinion. Should Alonso not confess, both thought the case should be brought to the attention of the Cardinal and the governing Council of the Inquisition. Only Herrera thought fit to mention that the parish priest had testified to the innocence of the accused, but, even so, he too recommended severe torture and, whatever the outcome, consultation with higher authority.

The application of torture is, as usual,[10] described in legal detail:

> And then immediately the aforesaid Lord Inquisitors commanded the warden of the prison of the aforesaid Holy Office to prepare the water torment and to take the aforesaid Licentiate to the chamber, and he did take the aforesaid Licentiate Diego Alonso to the chamber; and then the aforesaid Lord Inquisitors went to the chamber where they found the aforesaid warden and the aforesaid Licentiate Diego Alonso whom they ordered to be stripped and tied on a wooden ladder with ropes made of hemp. And the aforesaid warden and Juan Ortega, the doorkeeper of the aforesaid Holy Office, stripped the aforesaid Licentiate and they placed him on the aforesaid ladder in his shirt and tied his arms and legs with ropes of hemp; and thus tied there, the Lord Inquisitors apostolic and ordinary said to the aforesaid Licentiate that they required and admonished him as representatives of God our Lord to tell and confess all he knew and had done and committed concerning the things of which he was accused, and if he did so, they would treat him with all the pity and charity that law and conscience would allow; and at the same time they declared that if there should be a lesion to his person or loss of a limb or death as a result of the aforesaid torment, it would be his fault and not that of their reverences, because their intention was only to know the truth.
>
> The aforesaid Licentiate replied that he had told the truth and that he didn't know anything else about the accusations and that he swore to God and the Holy Scriptures that he never did it or consented to it or knew what it was, and if he dies, he will die innocent and "I swear to God that I am more in the right than you, and there is nothing else, I swear to God; I swear to God that I never saw it," and he said many times with arrogance, "I swear to God, I swear to God, there is nothing to it, there is nothing to it."
>
> It was then commanded that water be poured into a piece of cloth which he had on his face, and a jar containing over a liter was poured until it was empty, and all the

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> while he was admonished by their reverences to tell the truth. The aforesaid Licentiate said that he had told the truth, and, if they would take away the water, he would confess. The water was taken away, and he did not say anything. It was commanded that they pour another jar into him. It poured to the bottom and he did not say anything. Then another was commanded and poured, and he did not say anything. So that now there were three jars all told. It was ordered that the ropes be tightened with tourniquets made of small sticks, and they were tightened; and he said that he hoped God would never show him mercy if he ever saw such a thing, and that he wished to die an evil death if he ever saw such a thing, and would that Our Lady might never help him if he ever saw such a thing or did it or talked about it. It was ordered that another jar of water be poured into him, and it was poured, and he said: "Oh, unfortunate me!" He was ordered to tell the truth or the ropes would be tightened further; and he said he had told the truth, and the ropes were tightened further. It was ordered that another jar of water be poured into him, and it was poured, but not entirely, which made a total of a little less than six jars. He said: "I swear to God you are breaking my leg; I swear to God you are breaking my leg!" which he said many times while gnashing his teeth at least ten times, one after another. It was ordered that he be taken down from the aforesaid ladder and untied from it and taken back to his cell. He was untied and taken back by the aforesaid warden. Present was I, Juan Ferńández Obregón, Notary.

On the 6th of February, 1517, the panel met again, and this time those members who were not Inquisitors had had enough and voted unanimously for absolution on condition that ten Old Christian witnesses would speak for Alonso under oath. The Lord Inquisitor Mendoza did not agree. He preferred to get rid of the peril Alonso represented for his institution by having him exiled from the Kingdom of Toledo for as long a time as "the most Reverend Lord Cardinal should deem necessary." And if he should "violate the exile, he should be considered guilty and his sentence decided and carried out by the governing Council."

The Lord Inquisitor Vélez was even more angry and adamant. Alonso, he said, was still

> vehemently suspect both because of the record and because of the escape, and the causes for suspicion had not been purged by the torture he underwent, because he [Vélez] knew that the accused was not deeply affected by it [*no le tuvo en mucho*] but rather emerged from it cheerfully.

Therefore he should be condemned to purge himself by presenting ten Old Christian witnesses. And if he could not find the full number, he should be tortured again to a degree based on those missing. His intention, it does not seem unfair to surmise, was to make sure by use of intimidation that few or none at all would dare stand up for Alonso. In any case, he concluded, the whole dossier should be sent to the governing Council. In view of this disagreement between the Inquisitors and the outside members of the panel, the meeting was adjourned.

However, the problem remained, and on the 11th of February the panel met once more in order to hear the opinion of the third Inquisitor, Francisco de Herrera, who spoke with candor and honesty. He began by repeating "what he said before": that, in view of the parish priest's statement, there was no "proof whatsoever *de veritate criminis*" against Diego Alonso. Furthermore, at the time

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the Holy Sacrament was first lost, no arrest was made. And finally, in direct disagreement with his colleague, Vélez, he pointed out that the torture that had been used "was the most severe that had been applied in the last six years, because it consisted of a great quantity of water and many cords and tourniquets." Alonso should therefore be absolved. As for exile, he pointed out the limitations of hypocrisy by observing that those members of the populace who believed the accused to be guilty would criticize the Inquisitors for imposing too mild a punishment.

On this note the document breaks off (thereby depriving us of the chance to overhear the violent argument that must have followed), but, since on the first page we find the annotation "absolved," we may conclude that the force and logic of Herrera's opinion prevailed. He obviously did not think anything was either wrong or counterproductive about the use of torture, and he would surely have been as relieved as his colleagues if a punishable admission could have been wrung from Alonso's lips. But, within the system, he reacted with probity and honesty. From all of which, I think we may draw two conclusions that are at once elementary and complementary. The first is that hypocrisy is a product of what might be called the institutionalization of the individual. Its natural habitats are universities, armies, large corporations, governments, and above all, inquisitions, all of them at once dependent on the larger population and designed to provide service for it. It does not occur where there is no public opinion at all—at Walden Pond or in Uganda. The second is that, even in this case—the extremity of which reflected the extreme sickness of sixteenth century Spanish public opinion—it can be defeated institutionally by someone who is able and honest in institutional terms.

References

[1]As for the eighteenth century, although I have only scanned a few transcripts, I would surmise that as social tension eased and Imperial history decelerated, inquisitional hypocrisy became more overt, a show directed to the benumbed public designed to keep the institution going. One of the mercies of the Inquisition was the practice (not always followed) of garroting those who recanted their heretical beliefs at the last minute. And in one rococo auto-de-fe it is recorded that a whole group of Inquisitors prayed in unison to God in front of the stake that those about to be burned might repent and save themselves from the fire. When they finally did, the Inquisitors turned to the assembled masses and cried that it was a miracle. It is impossible to imagine the Inquisitors with whom the reader is about to become acquainted behaving in any such way. A serious archival investigation might yield remarkable results for the history of hypocrisy.

[2]Only the peasants pretended to absolute confidence in their "clean blood," since, unlike hidalgos and nobles, they had no history of lucrative intermarriage with wealthy Jewish families. (See Américo Castro's *The Structure of Spanish History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.: 1954 for further discussion.) However, since they had no record of their ancestry, those of Jewish descent often launched the counteraccusation of peasant intermarriage or intercourse with Moriscos. The genealogical aspect of social tension in Golden Age Spain, although strange to us, was of paramount importance.

[3]Although Kierkegaard somewhere conceives of the ultimate ironist as rejecting comprehension and so constituting his own audience (roughly the situation of Calderón's God), historically and socially the ironist has wanted to be understood by some sort of an "in-group." "Irony"—remarks Vladimir Jankélévitch—"does not want to be believed; it wants to be understood." (*L'Ironie où la bonne conscience*, Alcan, Paris: 1950, p. 51.) As a result of their situation, those under suspicion in sixteenth and seventeenth century Spain lived in a substratum of irony as pointed and prevalent as the superstratum of hypocrisy was impervious and prevalent. Queen Isabella's confessor, who knew well his fellow converts (meaning, of converted lineage) warns them against the "sin of irony."

[4]Basically, the *secreto* meant the secret archives that nobody except those belonging to the institution had ever seen, prior to the Napoleonic invasion.

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[5]Elsewhere he is referred to as red-haired, a very suspicious physical trait at the time. That it is mentioned here indicates that he had already been picked out as the culprit.

[6]When asked by the Inquisitors what he had planned to do if he had succeeded in escaping, Alonso replied that he would have gone on a pilgrimage to Guadalupe. It seems strange, but it may well have been true. As Albert Sicroff has shown in a fascinating article ("Clandestine Judaism in the Hieronomite Monastery of . . .," *Guadalupe, Studies in Honor of M. J. Benardete*, ed. I. A. Langnas and B. Sholod, Las Americas, New York: 1965), this religious institution (as rooted into national life as the Inquisition itself) had become a place of refuge for the persecuted caste.

[7]See the last section of Chapter VI of my *The Spain of Fernando de Rojas* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.: 1972) for even more striking examples.

[8]As noted earlier, at the beginning he had guessed that it was friends or relatives of Father Vargas who had denounced him. But by this time a rumor of the real situation must have reached his ears. As I point out in *The Spain of Fernando de Rojas*, "From trial records and the reports, either by inmates trying to curry favor with their Inquisitors or by professional *moscas* (informers), it would seem that the entire institution was involved in note passing, wall tapping, shouting, surreptitious whispering, and signaling from windows" (p. 107). Thus each new prisoner was a source of news. Alonso, himself, was accused of note passing by another prisoner.

[9]This could have been a later rumor, as apparently the Inquisitors feared, but there is no direct evidence.

[10]The procedures of torture are explained in detail by H. C. Lea in *The Inquisition of Spain* (3 vols., Macmillan, Inc., New York: 1907), who also includes translated transcripts similar to that quoted here. Torture was one more form of legal interrogation and had to be duly recorded.

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QUENTIN ANDERSON

John Dewey's American Democrat

DESPITE THE FACT that nineteenth century American individualism is said to have encouraged greedy entrepreneurs, it is still thought of as having been a social good. It suggests multiplied opportunities for action, a chance to see and represent the world in the light of unique and valuable personal perspectives, and an effectual social pluralism. In many conventional accounts the individualism of nineteenth century America loses out when industrialism and such deterministic intellectual influences as evolution and scientific positivism come to frame the American's sense of his world. What these accounts suggest is that American individualism was snuffed out by the impersonality of an industrial or capitalist order. It is hardly surprising that, having proclaimed itself a democracy, America should have celebrated the removal of constraints on individual action and seen the coming of industrialism as a fresh kind of threat. But there has always been an error in the American assessment of the meaning of individualism.

The impersonality, the block character of the social scene had already been established before industrialism appeared. Individualism implies seeing the world as a whole, whether one views that whole as an oyster, as a J. P. Barnum did, or as adverse and threatening, as did Thoreau when he wrote the section of *Walden* called "Economy." If one views the social world as a whole, one will necessarily see it as impersonal. Individualism implies taking the world impersonally, and in this respect its underlying character remains the same—for the Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote before the Civil War and for the industrialist who appeared after the Civil War. We have discovered limited ways of acknowledging this: we say that Emerson's transcendentalism is congruent with the activities of robber barons; or that pragmatism encourages the belief that business is always socially beneficent. But these concessions operate to conceal the fundamental failure to see that individualism is a response to a social world that appears to the individual to be monolithic. What best complements American individualism—in fact, its only possible object—is an undifferentiated society. The judgments one makes about such a society are, by the same logic, judgments about the conditions that govern it, rather than feelings and beliefs about other people, since ties to other individuals or groups give the world a plural character.

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The American individual is a person forced to get his sense of social reality wholesale; it is only marginally mediated by family, class, tradition, and region. These remain secondary to the looming social spectacle. To be oneself is first of all to be related to that spectacle; the weight of the problem of self-definition and of national definition are not easily separable. The question, What is an American? tended therefore to be given oddly inclusive answers during the nineteenth century, by foreign visitors and by Americans themselves. Emerson and Tocqueville saw the individual as having to find an identity in a society chiefly characterized by commercial pursuits, an aspect of America that led Emerson to seek another ground for his sense of self. In this light, the lonely individual is not so much conscious of his rights, of his liberty, and of manifold opportunities as he is frozen before a social spectacle so inclusive as to require an extravagant personal assertion, an identity founded on an equally inclusive personal claim.

Americans are often scolded for their inability to take history seriously. Since the days of Jackson they have been distinguishable in a way that Melville noted with high exasperation in 1849. In *Mardi*, a visitor calls the vociferously assertive Americans "sovereign-kings" and insists that, despite their boast that history culminates in them, the United States is just as subject to cataclysmic change as was the Roman Empire. This protest is made by someone who is himself a king, a member of a dynasty. The epithet he uses is precise. Melville is saying that Americans have claimed not kingship alone, but that they have incorporated the very idea of sovereignty in each individual, and that to do so is to defy temporal change. This inclusive personal assertion was a response to a perceived social reality. American individualism makes the claim to sovereign kingship because the American lives in a society in which his successful manipulation of the environing conditions of the present moment is crucial to his sense of himself. One does not oppose such a society by forming a party but rather by calling for a total transformation of the conditions.

It remains true that a great many Americans grow up with a disposition to conceive of social reality *en bloc*, a fact that enables one to link two familiar observations about the United States. Individuals who see their country *en bloc* and cherish the spectacle are led to use the puzzling expression "un-American," an expression that leads one to ask how such a large and various community can be said to exhibit a single pervasive character. Those who respond negatively to what they see as an overriding American condition must of course take a further imaginative step: they must disengage themselves from it, usually by creating a counterworld, which in Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau is the imaginative construct called "nature."

The premise that Americans see their own country as a whole in a far greater degree than do members of other Western societies licenses, and even requires, the study of individual Americans as more definitive of our culture than are members of other Western societies. If each bears more of the burden of both personal *and* national definition, each is by the same token a more "public" fact than is the individual Englishman, whose personal definition depends on a more effectually plural social world.

As Louis Hartz discovered, Americans do not appear able to imagine the United States as characterized by such an effectual pluralism of belief or interest.[1] In other societies, in which groups with variously intertwined social, reli-

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gious, and economic interests are visibly contending, social forces wear human faces, slogans invite bloodshed, and parties have obvious and shifting relationships to a sovereignty distinguishably held by ascendant powers. By contrast, much of our national history appears rather weightless. It was not weightless for those who in various critical periods died or suffered or went hungry, yet these events in our past do not seem to have penetrated to a persisting core of indifference to, say, possible threats to our survival as a people, or to have affected the national incapacity to respond to bodies of ideas that might bring about basic social changes.

Recent attempts to understand this disposition seem only to scratch the surface. We must go farther back than Marcuse did when, in 1964, he said that capitalism had appropriated the very language in which proposals for social change might be expressed;[2] or than Christopher Lasch does when he speaks of a new narcissism as having arisen in the present century.[3] Our assertion of sovereign kingship—an internally sanctioned power to define American reality—has for more than a century been matched by an incapacity to make fresh responses to the massive changes in our collective situation that industrialism, war, depression, and accelerated technological change have brought about.[4] That incapacity has the character Toynbee attributed to Eskimo culture, speaking of it as exquisitely adapted to extreme conditions, like that of a man who has learned to cling to the face of a cliff.

John Dewey, the most socially engaged of our philosophers, offers a crucial instance of an extreme response to a cultural situation that has been provocative of extremity. Individuals, paradoxical though it may seem, have been the best indicators of common conditions in our society. The testimony of such commanding American imaginations as those of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman on the character of those conditions is indispensable. Dewey's importance in our cultural history arises directly out of his struggle with a problem posed by these three figures: How can a community made up of such individuals be conceived? Dewey was in his early twenties when Emerson died, and he lived and worked past the middle of our century. Although his powers are hardly as great as those of his three predecessors, his influence was demonstrably profound, especially as it contributed to our sense of ourselves as individuals and as members of the society.

It is significant that Dewey as philosopher, educator, and social reformer is now felt to be a consummately boring figure. We avoid him because he stands for something intolerable about the American condition that must be buried. He took the traditional declaration that the United States is a democracy with a seriousness for which there is no word except perhaps religious. This is the source of the obsessive quality in his prose we call bad writing; like Faulkner's Benjy, he is forever "trying to say" that, if we will but enter fully into the meaning of experience, American individualism can become the basis of a true community. Dewey's hopes are founded on a sense of individuals recognizably present in Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, but we have lost the kind of faith in democracy Dewey had and thus fail to see his connection with them. Dewey's faith in democracy necessitated some alteration of the Emersonian vi-

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sion of things, but its unmistakable continuity with that vision is too frequently ignored.

A story told of John Dewey that may well be apocryphal is nonetheless exemplary. The philosopher was sitting at his desk in his Long Island farmhouse when water began to drip on his papers. He went upstairs and opened the bathroom door. In the overflowing tub sat a child, who said, "Don't just stand there, John! Go get the mop!" The story is reminiscent of an episode in Rousseau's *Emile*. The tutor wishes to give Emile a sense of the impersonality of natural conditions. When the child breaks a window the tutor puts off having it repaired: Emile will learn that when one breaks a window one is chilly. No intervention of the human will is visible. But of course the tutor is stage manager; authority is present though masked. The story about Dewey takes us a step beyond Rousseau; the youngster in the bathtub is functioning in a world that is not conditioned by authority; child and father face a situation common to them both. They can start from scratch. Here is a matter that demands an appropriate means-end resolution—water is in the wrong place; clean it up! Responsibility and the need to demand it are not in question—the histories and passions of the two characters are stilled and sterilized by the child's definition of a problem and a solution.

The story is unfair because Dewey did call for a discipline somehow diffused in the ambient air of the home or classroom. Yet, in what it chiefly emphasizes, it is not in the least unfair. Dewey offered an account of human relationships in which people had no personal histories to color their encounters with one another. One could find a true beginning, a still point in time, a false present in which it was possible to start over. No reverberation of earlier moments affects this one. The intertwined, internalized elements of the human condition are eliminated; no sense that our peculiar histories play a part in every action is allowed to intrude. Pragmatism, when applied to human affairs, is a fairy tale of energies magically released from the conditions we know into what Dewey called the "situation," jointly apprehended by the problem-solvers involved. But pragmatism is utterly helpless before the encounter of two or more live persons. The philosophy that tries to make the method of inquiry a matter of daily practice has only a tangential relation to human actuality. This must be emphasized because of Dewey's well-known insistence that his thought aimed at reporting how things go among us, and because he often tells us that what he has to say about experience is designed to work *within* experience; to reconstruct it and make it more successful in bringing about desired consummations. At the turn of the century when Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, and William Vaughan Moody saw their fellows as driven by beastliness boiling up from within, or helpless before natural and economic forces, Dewey stoutly maintained that we were in the saddle, that there was more day to dawn, that, as in Emerson and Whitman, this very moment was as full of possibility as any antecedent moment.

But how can the philosopher of practice be associated with the abstract and visionary Emerson? Put generally, it was Dewey's enduring preoccupation with a problem posed by Emerson's work that led him to turn to science and technology as means to realize the democracy. Emerson had said: "We shall meet again on a higher platform." Dewey set about building the platform. Dewey,

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like Thoreau, Whitman, and even Melville, started from Emerson, because in Emerson the primary conception of American selfhood had been clearly and widely proclaimed.

Dewey was in his mid-forties when, on the occasion of Emerson's centenary in 1903, he called him "the philosopher of democracy." The conviction of Emerson's generation that each of us had a personal capacity to achieve a sufficient vision of reality had to be modified. The "platform" on which we were all to meet required a method for securing a common vision. Dewey did not alter Emerson's individual; what he altered was the conception of the means available to him to achieve a union with his fellows. Viewed from the outside, their accounts of our humanity are alike, equally fantastic in their denial of the primary significance of our sexuality, our propensity to conflict—both within and with others (and hence of our capacity to resolve conflict as well)—and the stubborn facts of instituted power within any given society. Both believed conflict and power would vanish in the common awareness of wholly attainable ideals. Stated positively, they hoped society could be transformed through a shared perception of universal conditions.

Three sentences from *Democracy and Education*, published in 1916, illustrate the assumption Dewey shared with Emerson. "This common understanding of the means and ends of action is the essence of social control. It is indirect, or emotional and intellectual, not direct or personal. Moreover it is intrinsic to the disposition of the person, not external and coercive."[5] These sentences are fairly staggering, whether read in context or out. Dewey is easily enough followed if we understand him to say that society does not function by giving orders all day long; that people do what they are expected to do because it is their impulse to do what is expected of them. When we ask, however, whether this is indeed the result of something "intrinsic" which is at the same time a "common understanding," we may well feel that the sentences bridge a chasm with a formula. Dewey has fantasized a tie between individuals and groups; there is no such magical consonance between self and society, nor do these terms refer to any imaginable psychic organization in which such transactions can take place. These are drastically edited or mutilated conceptions of both individuals and groups. Dewey's notion of communication as a literal making common of the information possessed by two or more people can only be realized within a system as impersonal as that of a computer. All political philosophy could be inserted between what is said to be "intrinsic" in a particular mind and what is said to be a "common understanding," and the gap would still remain largely open.

In such flat and determinedly innocent sentences, couched in a prose meant to be widely available to teachers, we hear the nineteenth century echoes that lead us back to Dewey's earlier work. Both Emerson and Whitman had insisted that our ties to others must be those created by "indirection," by our common apprehension of things, that simply cancels the often harsh encounters of alien wills, groups, and interests.

We are accustomed to think of Dewey in connection with a scientific positivism current in the 1920s that, we have lately been told, was actually a mask for power, for covert economic domination. But the early Dewey, who explicitly disavowed Comte's positivism, is working in a quite different American vein, in

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which the connection of the individual with his inward vision operates as a sufficient guarantee of reality. Yet, a persistent effort to see the world only from one's own perspective precludes a full recognition of human others; it leads ultimately to an emphasis on what can be universally apprehended, like the periodic table of elements. This is true whether you try to possess the whole in vision or simply see it as an order which you as an individual can profit by. In this formal sense, a John D. Rockefeller, who perceives the possibility of using rebates from the railways in order to organize an oil trust, and an Emerson are alike; they have both seen the world as an impersonal order by seeing it as an object for the self that is susceptible to definition and manipulation. This is an American phenomenon; not every social world is open to apprehension as a whole. In France or England it would have been impossible during the nineteenth century to be either a Rockefeller or an Emerson. One would have had to reckon, like the hero of a *bildungsroman*, with a plurality of persons and institutions, and choose a path in relation to them.

To be an individualist in this sense is quite distinct, of course, from being a crank or an eccentric: it is to encounter the object of your experience as a whole, whether for the purposes of vision or of acquisition. What looks like a paradox in Emerson is not, as a personal attitude, a paradox at all. In 1830 Emerson wrote: "It seems to be true that the more exclusively idiosyncratic a man is, the more general and infinite he is. . . ." Or, as Dewey put it in his first ambitious essay over half a century later: "Transcendentalism was incomplete until it recognized that the universal consciousness can be realized only in an individual bearer." Dewey is referring not to what is called transcendentalism in this country, but to the whole German tradition from Kant to Hegel and beyond, and he is revising it in the Emersonian mode. In this essay of 1886, "Psychology as Philosophic Method," he wrote what Emerson was too consistently inconsistent to write, a sketch for an Emersonian metaphysics. Dewey's commentators, who shuffle this essay out of sight or cite it as an aberration, have distorted the whole question of Dewey's primary focus in the eighties and nineties of the last century. They speak of the first important phase of his development as Hegelian, as qualified by his attachment to the idea of the universal mind, and simply fail to note that "mind" had to have an "individual bearer"—precisely the Emersonian position.

Again, his commentators use philosophic vocabularies that simply do not engage the area of Dewey's most personal concern in these years: his passionate absorption in the idea of democracy, which he held to with religious fervor. If the individual could be brought into communion with society without losing his unique access to the universal, Dewey's problem would be solved. What Dewey got from Hegel in the years following 1886 was, as he saw it, continuous with what he got from Darwin. To enable the "individual bearer" of Emerson's generation to join his fellows, he needed a conception of a social process in which the bearer figured. Hegel offered an account of society in which a developing truth was immanent, and for Dewey this development had a basis in the plasticity of our biological endowment that he found in Darwin. This movement toward union was adumbrated in his favorite Emerson essays, but the idea of a developing and self-correcting body of scientific inquirers offered what seemed to him a more satisfactory model for tying individuals together in a society.

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Each individual would have access to a developing body of truth, rather than to that static vision of the whole that Emerson frequently fell back on. Instead of being the puppet of universal mind, as in Hegel, each citizen would be potentially a possessor of all that was known and knowable.

Dewey hoped for individuals who would be both free and capable of recognizing, and acting on, a shared perception of reality. In his book on Leibnitz, Dewey describes Leibnitz's monads as "a true democracy, in which each citizen has sovereignty."[6] How could Dewey bring about such a democracy in the United States? The monads, whose form is individual and whose content is universal—that is, each is a recapitulation of the whole—together with the similar conception of the individual in the elder Henry James—in which the form is once again particular, the content incipiently universal—are far more relevant to Dewey's work in the 1890s than is Hegel. Dewey's ambitious essay of 1886 had as its core the sentence already quoted: "Transcendentalism was incomplete until it recognized that the universal consciousness can be realized only in an individual bearer." It provoked a withering retort from William James's English correspondent, Shadworth Hodgson, who, replying in the same British journal, *Mind*, called Dewey's position "a shortcut indeed to the deification of the individual." Dewey was stung and shaken, as his later work reveals. Hodgson had no sense of the cultural extremity that Dewey's subscription to democracy imposed on him—the unsolved Emersonian problem of the union of the citizens—nor did his fellow Americans, William James or Santayana. A brief account of Dewey's career helps us to see how different his situation was from theirs.

In reading the young Dewey one of the first things we feel is his demand that the world be shaped in accordance with his desire to master it. Yet Dewey was exceedingly able; he could master philosophic systems with ease and had an obvious gift for philosophic exposition and a prose often far more lucid than that of his later work. Nonetheless, beside the more sophisticated William James and Santayana, Dewey must be described as having a tin ear, both for the distinctive qualities of things and for the ways of language.

He was, and remained, a provincial, yet a peculiarly representative one. At the same time he had a fire in his belly—the appetite to prevail. And how much more he had seen of the United States than James or Santayana! Dewey had grown up and been educated in Burlington, Vermont. He taught high school in Oil City, Pennsylvania; attended our first graduate school on the German model, Johns Hopkins; and subsequently taught philosophy at Michigan. At Chicago, as professor of pedagogy as well as philosophy, he encountered in the university, at Jane Addams's Hull House, and in the schools the problems of creating a democracy in urban America. He finally settled at Columbia where he taught until 1930. Dewey had an extraordinary insight into the generic situation of the intellectual heirs of Emerson's period, but he was, as Neil Coughlan has shrewdly noted, simply unaware of the "richness and density" of the social and intellectual life led by his English contemporaries.[7] No American could call him a hick, but a cultivated European would have found him ineradicably provincial.

Unlike James and Santayana, whose upbringings had fostered a measure of detachment from a country undergoing an industrial transformation with all its consequences for the democracy, Dewey seemed to feel that the whole country

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was in some way his affair. It was his inner imperative that American reality be brought into accord with the democratic vision. He copied the ways of the professors—and it should be noted that he was a member of the first generation that profited fully by the founding of actual universities across the country. He tried, within the terms exacted by his professorial status, to fight for the people at large; he denounced economic tyranny and said repeatedly that our hopes lay with the nascent democracy. Santayana's transplantation to another culture must have seemed inconceivable to him. Precisely because he was so caught up in his time and place (he even found a way to be a Christian, a social gospeller, up into the 1890s), his impulse to implant his demanding dream in the minds of his fellow citizens and his success in doing so make him representative of an important strain in the national consciousness.

During the late 1880s and the 1890s, that is to say, his late twenties and his thirties, Dewey put most of his energies into texts and course outlines in psychology and ethics. He emphasized these over the metaphysics and logic that preoccupied his contemporaries, because, as he put it, "Psychology is the democratic movement come to consciousness." In other words, the "sovereign-kings" had to become aware of the nature of their responsibility in a democracy. In an encyclopedia contribution of 1894 Dewey says that Hegel had shifted the basis of morality from Kant's abstract reason to the "unified life of society," and Dewey meant to do nothing less. What has been ignored is that what Dewey had on hand when he set about trying to unite us was not a complex image of society derived from Hegel or anyone else; it was a stock of Emersonian individuals. His society would be a far cry from Hegel's, since it looked toward a future in which individuals had assumed the full burden that fell upon them with the disappearance of every external authority.

Dewey paid a heavy price to bring about the union of Emersonian individuals. His individuals had extraordinary powers as communicators and joint actors with their fellows; they shared a "common understanding" of such impersonal, ahistorical concerns as technology. But unlike Emerson's, they had no consciousness of a struggle with a recurring inner division in the self. Emerson (in this respect still a Christian) had acknowledged an internal difficulty in sustaining his vision of things; Dewey's individual bearer had none. He had to grant, as Dewey often put it in the 1890s, that he was "partial" or "incomplete"; but he need not admit, as Emerson so often did, that he had a built-in doubleness, that there was an abiding encounter between his lesser worldly ego and the grand ego of his widest vision. Dewey found it necessary to suppress the relationships that occupied Emerson's lesser ego.

The essay that most conveniently exhibits the consequences of Dewey's willingness to sacrifice distinctive ties to human others, to wife, to child, to neighbor is called, somewhat misleadingly, "The Significance of the Problem of Knowledge," published in 1897. It seems to foretell an imminent secular apocalypse. Like most of Dewey's uses of history, it tacitly assumes that we have now overcome what was limiting about the past; history for Dewey is generally an account of the resolution of false dualisms that keep us from plunging into that ongoing wave of experience within which we are—or are just about to be—immersed. Although ostensibly about epistemology, the essay actually deals with epistemology as symptomatic of a struggle between conservative rational-

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ists and progressive empiricists, now happily resolved. Dewey begins by telling us that philosophy had been born in Greece when "the time of direct and therefore unconscious union with corporate life, finding therein stimuli, codes, and values, had departed." Dewey says this led to Socrates' practical questions about the proper goals of life, but unfortunately these practical concerns gave way to the work of theoreticians. Theory was split off from practice, and under the Roman Empire and the medieval church, knowledge was purveyed exclusively by external authority. When during the Renaissance the individual arose, he had to take matters into his own hands. In the passages that follow, Dewey tells how the individual became qualified to cope with this new and overwhelming burden, which is to say, how democracy became possible.

> The entire problem of medieval philosophy is that of absorption, of assimilation. The result was the creation of the individual. Hence the problem of modern life is that of reconstruction, reform, reorganization. The entire content of experience needs to be passed through the alembic of individual agency and realization. The individual is to be the bearer of civilization; but this involves a remaking of the civilization which he bears. Thus we have the dual question: How can the individual become the organ of corporate action? How can he make over the truth authoritatively embodied in institutions of church and state into frank, healthy and direct expression of the simple act of free living? On the other hand how can civilization preserve its own integral value and import when subordinated to the agency of the individual instead of exercising supreme sway over him?

After noting that epistemology cannot provide the method the individual requires for doing what he must now do, Dewey continues:

> Admitting that the practical problem of modern life is the maintenance of the spiritual values of civilization, through the medium of the insight and decision of the individual, the problem is foredoomed to futile failure save as the individual in performing his task can work with a definite and controllable tool. This tool is science.

Science, it is important to note, comes on stage as enabling the creation of a community composed of those I have here named "sovereign-kings."

> Given the freed individual, who feels called upon to create a new heaven and a new earth, and who feels himself gifted with the power to perform the task to which he is called:—and the demand for science, for a method of discovering and verifying truth becomes imperious. The individual is henceforth to supply control, law, and not simply stimulation and initiation. What does this mean but that instead of any longer receiving or assimilating truth he is now to search for and create it? Having no longer the truth imposed by authority to rely upon, there is no recourse save to secure the authority of truth.

The self-corrective method of Charles Sanders Peirce's community of scientific investigators, who had to answer to each other for the results they published, has been widened and distorted to serve the democracy. Dewey uses that method as a sort of social cement: since the results of inquiry will be apparent to all, all will be bound by those results. Of course this assertion becomes far more sophisticated later in Dewey's new logic of inquiry, which took its first form in the *Studies in Logical Theory* of 1903. Yet the initial assertion stands: democracy

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must depend on a common method of knowing and of testing its knowledge; citizens are to be associated not by what grows out of their shared lives and histories and the ideas and hopes that grow out of these, but by a method of discovering what is here called "truth." History is as definitely transcended as it is in Emerson.

To focus exclusively on Dewey's shifting engagement with systems of thought is to lose any sense of the urgency of his situation in the culture. His principal shift of emphasis must be described in terms that relate him to that situation. In order to unite the individual with a hoped-for community, Dewey had to give a new content to the "Absolute" to which the individual bearer of the 1886 essay "Psychology as Philosophic Method" had been tied; by which, in fact, he had been constituted. In this essay we are told that to know *as* he knew was the only way to know, and that he was the only authority. As Dewey put it, "But that the universe has no existence except as absolutely realized in an individual, that is, except in self consciousness, is precisely the result of philosophy, and can therefore be no objection to such a consideration of the universe: in fact such a statement only amounts to saying that psychology considers the universe as it really is." No wonder Hodgson had charged Dewey with deifying the individual!

Dewey is carrying forward both Emerson's assertion of self-reliance *and* the access to universal truth that ultimately justifies self-reliance. To say this is an idealist position once held by a man who became a pragmatist or instrumentalist begs the important question. Dewey's use of the term "psychology," which looks so strange to us, is warning enough that what he wants is a way of tying Emersonian man to his fellows, to the democracy, and this is why he must substitute science and a self-corrective method of finding truth for the absolute. Dewey's own account of this shift is quite as external and misleading as those of his commentators. But we can get a sense of what happened by juxtaposing the essay of 1886, "Psychology as Philosophic Method," which had provoked Hodgson to scold him for deifying individuals, with the essay "Psychology and Philosophic Method," published thirteen years later in 1899. Here, Dewey responds unmistakably to Hodgson's attack. Referring to an earlier historical period in which all authority was imposed on the individual from without, and the individual as such was subject to a "low valuation," Dewey goes on:

> As against all this, the assertion is ventured that psychology, supplying us with a knowledge of the behavior of experience, is a conception of democracy. Its postulate is that since experience fulfills itself in individuals, since it administers itself through their instrumentality, the account of the course and method of this achievement is a significant and indispensable affair.
>
> Democracy is possible only because of a change in intellectual conditions. It implies tools for getting at truth in detail, and day by day, as we go along. Only such possession justifies the surrender of fixed, all-embracing principles to which, as universals, all particulars are subject for valuation and regulation. Without such possession, it is only the courage of the fool that would undertake the venture to which democracy has committed itself—the ordering of life in response to the needs of the moment in accordance with the ascertained truth of the moment. Modern life involves the deification of the here and the now; of the specific, the particular, the unique, that which happens once and has no measure of value save such as it brings with itself. Such deification is monstrous fetishism, unless the deity be there; unless the universal lives, moves, and has its being in experience individualized.

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The "tools for getting at truth in detail" (the method of science) enable Dewey to say in effect, "Take that, Shadworth Hodgson!" Dewey has replaced his earlier version of the universal with the moving front of perennially reconstructed vision that science makes possible. Immersed in this sense of things we can all apprehend reality in the same way.

Dewey has a much feebler grasp of human actuality than Emerson, who had celebrated the moment of experience but remained aware of an element in himself, a petty ego, that militated against the total coherence he tried for. But Dewey was never to have any way of describing internal struggle. The following passages from his ethical writings of the 1890s suggest how scoured of negations and limitations his individual was. He speaks of the emotion of anger as taking two forms: simple hostility against another person diminishes you by making you feel less "complete," but anger at a piece of meanness, "serves to do away with that meanness and braces the self." Dewey goes on to make it plain that the effect on our inner kingdom rather than the effect on others is the basis for the judgment of an impulse: "the completest possible interaction of an impulse with all other experiences, or the completest possible relation of an impulse to the whole self constitutes the predicate or moral value, of an act."

The criterion for the discrimination of right and wrong, he holds, is their effect on the interrelated experiences that make up the self; as in Emerson, we do not have to go outside or consult an external standard to make a judgment of what we have done. He writes:

> The basis for discrimination between "right" and wrong in the judgment is found in the fact that some acts tend to narrow the self, to introduce friction into it, to weaken its power, and in various ways to *disintegrate* it, while other acts tend to expand, invigorate, harmonize, and in general organize the self.

What is primary for Dewey is the extension of our inner kingdom. One of his ways of describing our relation to society in these years is to say that this expansion of the individual is a fulfillment of the society's truly democratic self, what all would hope for when they came to see what democracy implied.

Dewey values the intimations in certain of Emerson's essays, in particular, "Fate," "Compensation," and "Spiritual Laws"—intimations that Emerson shared his own sense of the self as growing, moving forward, and generating its ideals internally instead of putting them ahead of us as something forever unattainable. And Dewey finds the ethical position of the elder Henry James akin to Emerson's. He echoes the elder James when he writes, "The consciousness of goodness is the consciousness of a completely unified self. If the agent is thinking of his own glory, or credit, or moral worth, or improvement, he is by that fact *divided;* there is the deed to be performed and the reflection of it into himself." What Dewey is saying is that to enter into the moving wave of continually reconstructed vision we have to be internally coherent to a degree that Emerson himself would have found beyond belief.

Dewey's attempt to incorporate the practical affairs of life *within* the visionary's possession of the "universal" led to the most extravagant and most nationally influential of his fantasies, his conception of the school. This was the work of his Chicago years. It was preceded by Dewey's curious involvement with Franklin Ford, which occurred while he was still at the University of Michigan. Dewey found a way to diffuse awareness of the fashion in which we were all

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joined together: the thing could be done by publishing a newspaper! Ford, who, as a journalist, was dazzled by the possibility that a wealth of information about the workings of the economy could be digested and presented to the public in such transparent form, that everyone would see just how the interests of the people at large were being betrayed, got Dewey to agree to edit such a paper. Everyone would be able to see that the activities of pork packers, senators, and railway barons composed a pattern inimical to the welfare of the people. As we might have put it in 1970, a complete and totally persuasive democratic counter-culture was possible. The newspaper, as Dewey wrote William James, would be the only organ of the society with an unbiased interest in the common welfare, and at the same time, a commodity indispensable to the majority; it would inevitably make money.

Historians of ideas, or of pragmatism itself, who treat Dewey's career as if its significance depended wholly on his handling of recognized philosophic issues, or who neglect the way in which his positions in philosophy or educational theory were overdetermined by emotional needs that corresponded to socially diffused needs, can make little of the Franklin Ford episode or of Dewey's involvement in the culture in general. The Ford scheme aroused Dewey's intense and quasi-religious sense of his mission to the democracy. All the readers of his newspaper would simultaneously become aware, each on his own hook, yet all together, of the truth about the society at large. Each a monad, then—the form individual, the content universal! But Ford was an odd chap; perhaps the glitter in his eye warned Dewey. After actually announcing publication, Dewey drew back, and the matter was silently dropped.

It was at Chicago that Dewey founded the Laboratory School. What Dewey asks of the school, as George E. Axtelle, one of his editors remarks, is incredible. A space station frees us from gravity alone; Dewey's school is an earth station—freed from the effects of sexual determination, externally imposed authority, "economic stress," class and status, and every form of conflict—yet all the information children need for growth is said to penetrate the walls. In *School and Society*, published in 1900, Dewey prints a flow chart of the school and its environing influences: the city, the country, the laboratory, the library. The school is the visible node of the working of what I have called reconstructive vision; it instills an absorbed awareness of the "method of intelligence." It is hard to convey Dewey's passion about it, but perhaps his fervor can be suggested. In *School and Society*, speaking of what happens to the child's imagination of the world when studying the beginnings of life on earth, he remarks:

> Where we now see only the outward doing and the outward product, there behind all visible results, is the readjustment of mental attitude, the enlarged and sympathetic vision, the sense of growing power, and the willing ability to identify both insight and capacity with the interests of the world and man. . . . When nature and society can live in the schoolroom, when the forms and tools of learning are subordinated to the substance of experience, then shall there be an opportunity for this identification, and culture shall be the democratic password.

For Dewey the schools became the cutting edge of democratic advance and the primary means of social reform. That he got so many people to share this fantasy is one of the most interesting clues we have about recent cultural history. "In education," Dewey writes,

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> meet the three most powerful motives of human activity. . . . Copartnership of these three motives, of affection [he means, of course, for children], of social growth, and of scientific inquiry—must prove as nearly irresistible as anything human when they are once united. And, above all else, recognition of the spiritual basis of democracy, the efficacy and responsibility of freed intelligence is necessary to secure this union.

No attempt is made here to assess the meaning of the public response to the philosopher's educational writings, or to try to say in what ways the schools that sprang up in Dewey's wake were little substitute worlds built with taxes. But it is clear that he had once more envisioned a substitute world—as he had in the case of the abortive newspaper project—envisioned, that is, a scene in which individuals could be united to other individuals through their grasp of something universal.

John Dewey's American democrat was originally conceived as an answer to the problem Emerson had set; that of making a democracy of individuals whose solitary and unlimited visions had guaranteed their identity. If we are properly naïve, we ask, "But won't their visions overlap if we bring them all together?" And Dewey, in effect, replies: "I have found an all-purpose vision in the method of science; everybody can use it; it is universal!" A child sitting in the classroom is offered an ever-widening dominion—mastery of the way things go in nature—on the condition that we all share the same light. A phrase of Whitman's helps us to understand Dewey's hope. Whitman says that "one eyesight does not countervail another eyesight"; we may all possess the world in vision without interfering with each other.

But the major books of Dewey's later career do not succeed in preserving the individual bearer, who becomes all bearer and loses all individuality. To read *Experience and Nature* is to be simultaneously aware of Dewey's mastery of technical philosophic issues and of a pervasive undersong, the tone of Faulkner's Benjy who is "trying to say." Dewey tries to immerse us in an experiential continuum that is clearly a fantasy unrealizable at any time because it depends upon ironing out all the differences between those who are to be immersed in it. They are abstract people who all receive the same messages, rather than people with histories like ourselves. Dewey, in fact, says that to conceive of experience one need not posit a self at all.

Yet this is the Dewey who in 1938 headed the commission to investigate the fabricated charges preferred against Trotsky at the Moscow trials and who had a long and honorable record as a scrapper for the rights of citizens of the democracy. He had split his Emerson, yet he did not discard either the man with access to the universal or the individual as citizen. Horace M. Kallen, a longtime associate of Dewey, describes this split in an admirable essay in which he shows that Dewey's holistic, perhaps even "transcendental" version of existence simply ran alongside his persistent assertion of the indispensable worth of the individual.[8] This rather empty assertion represented his fidelity to the attempt to realize the democracy he had undertaken in his youth.

The perception that in Dewey one finds the last gasp of the American faith in democracy—the individual is eviscerated in behalf of impersonal system, yet

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maintained as a citizen with rights—leads to another conclusion about the four decades that have followed 1938, the year in which the report on Trotsky was issued. During these four decades many able Americans have behaved like the nineteenth century individualists described here. They have seen the society as an adverse whole, and they have tried to make a massive counterclaim. In 1938 they found such a counterclaim in Stalinism, an impersonal system that sopped up all history to reveal apocalyptic vision. They have since made counterclaims less overtly political, such as those made for the sufficiency of art or language as universal systems that enclose us all. Americans seem to retain an original impulse to shore up their identities by claiming either a sufficient vision or command of an impersonal system that will serve to defend them against a society they persist in regarding as adverse to them. In this context Dewey looks transitional, a man who retained, at the price of his own consistency, a faith in democracy we have quite lost. But the fact that ties Dewey to us and most directly affects the prospects for American society is that Dewey did not get his power or his influence as the proponent of democracy; he got it, as most now do, by offering his fellows an ostensibly impersonal, ostensibly sufficient vision.

I am thinking, of course, of the many intellectuals who now try to catch us up in a universe of discourse either tacitly or explicitly self-contained, a systematic, all-inclusive view, whether it be of demography, econometrics, or literary criticism. Such portable worlds are immune to the questions and judgments of others—as nakedly inclusive and assertive as Whitman's "Song of Myself"—and have come to characterize intellectual activity in this country. Stripped of any acknowledgment of a company of peers who might judge them, such schemes are also—like Emerson's moments of inclusive vision—focused on the conditions attributed to our world, and simply exclude full-fledged human others, personalities who are qualified by their histories, yet free to act within these limitations.

Proponents of ostensibly self-contained systems are not forced to acknowledge personal agency or their limitations; they have a curious similarity to corporations. It is as if many people had found themselves impelled by the character of the American world to try to apprehend it as a set of conditions rather than as a human scene. The unparalleled material success of the nation has provoked a profound psychic disaffection, yet the disaffection mirrors the impersonality it habitually condemns. Both those who cherish and those who disdain American conditions have an impoverished awareness of other people.

I am hopeful enough to believe that comprehension of the history of American individualism may help us to see the character of our impoverishment. It is important that we understand Dewey and pragmatism. I have referred to Dewey's positions as fantastic, as fostering widespread illusions. His view of men, women, and children reduces them to interchangeable communicators and cancels their personal histories; his schools aim at immersing children in an experiential flux magically credited with the power of social transformation. His conception of experience itself is an attempt to dragoon us all into his visionary wave.

Israel Scheffler has described the work of Dewey and other pragmatists as positing a continuity within experience which their philosophic writings do not support.[9] I have tried to show that such a totalized view of the world arises

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among those who seize on it as an object for the self; and that our cultural climate has so diffused the impulse to make this wholesale appropriation, that these philosophers were not conscious of the difficulty, cited by Scheffler, of assimilating theory to practice, or of the impossibility I have emphasized—the assumption of a literally common context for communication and action, an assumption that Dewey's affirmation of our distinctive personal worth simply contradicts.

In effect, this assumption is Dewey's claim to unlimited power, quite as much a claim to power as that of any other sufficient system. It appears that Emerson's longing for the day when the most private vision would be the most public vision is close to being realized. The consequence for our associated life is that we no longer seem to have any way of referring to its nature and requirements. Yet it seems clear that thought about human affairs can hardly come to much unless we can learn to prize the achievement of actual individuation and to call on a plurality of judging selves for solutions to our problems.

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[5]John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: 1916), p. 47. *Intellectual* as used here refers to a common grasp of the meaning of a shared activity.

[6]John Dewey, *Leibniz's New Essays Concerning the Human Understanding* (Chicago: 1888), reprinted in the *The Early Works of John Dewey*, I: 1882-1888 (Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, Ill.: 1969), p. 295.

[7]Neil Coughlan, *Young John Dewey* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1975), p. 109. Coughlan assimilates Dewey's Emersonian strain to his interest in the neo-Hegelians. But Dewey modified these thinkers in behalf of the democracy, and in this way preserved his kinship with Emerson.

[8]Horace M. Kallen, "Individuality, Individualism and John Dewey," *Antioch Review*, XIX, Fall 1959, 299-314.

[9]Israel Scheffler, *Four Pragmatists: A Critical Introduction to Peirce, James, Mead and Dewey* (Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: 1974).

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CURRENT WORK AND CONTROVERSIES, VOL. 2 (1962). These essays reassess some accepted views on major themes of intellectual life and history: Morton White on anti-intellectualism; Richard Hofstadter on the intellectual and social roots of Dewey's educational philosophy; Edward Grant and Benjamin Nelson on late medieval and early modern physics; and G. A. Kursanov on Philipp Frank and his philosophy of science, as well as Seymour Slive, William Travis, Paul Friedrich, and David Hawkins.

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